KNOW YOUR ENEMY, KNOW YOURSELF: UNDERSTANDING THE
ENEMY IN THE WAR ON TERROR

BY

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APPROVAL

The undersigned certify that this thesis meets master's-level standards of research, argumentation, and expression.

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ABSTRACT

As the United States brings its decade-long war against terrorism to an end, it is important that the lessons from this period are not relegated to a footnote of American history. Historically, the United States has tended to miscalculate and misunderstand its enemies particularly during the early phases of the struggle. This thesis focuses specifically on the policies and responses of the George W. Bush Administration and its "War on Terror" as a case study to explore this phenomenon holistically. First, it develops a conceptual framework that defines understanding; identifies public discourse, public opinion, and government policy as locales for the creation and observation of understanding; and then employs the theoretical concepts of groupthink, social identity, and cognitive closure theory to explain understanding shortfalls. Second, this thesis provides a detailed historical review of Osama bin Laden, al-Qaeda, and the Clinton Administration's counterterrorism policies. Third, it applies the conceptual framework to the case study to evaluate how well America understood al-Qaeda and if there were any impediments to its understanding. This thesis also touches on the question of the utility and possibility of greater understanding. In the final analysis, the findings support the conclusion that American understanding of al-Qaeda during the Bush Administration was ultimately thwarted for a variety of reasons. In spite of this fact, America has been largely successful in dismantling or crippling al-Qaeda. The thesis concludes with a review of the implications of misunderstanding at the strategic level and offers policy and decision-makers recommendations to avoid cognitive traps in the future.

CONTENTS

Introduction

It is often presumed that greater understanding leads to success. Sun Tzu's maxim has become a *de facto* law in the minds of many students of the art of war. "Know the enemy, know yourself; your victory will never be endangered," prescribed Sun Tzu.[1] Many from academia, government, and the national security community embrace this dictum as if it were fact. Mary Habeck, in her book *Knowing the Enemy: Jihadist Ideology and the War on Terror*, said: "Only by understanding the elaborate ideology of the jihadist faction can the United States, as well as the rest of the world, determine how to contain and eventually end the threat they pose to stability and peace."[2] Representative Mac Thornberry (R, TX), who serves as the Vice Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee and heads the Subcommittee on Emerging Threats, wrote, "real success starts with real understanding."[3] One of the fundamental responsibilities of America's Intelligence Community is to know the enemy.[4] In pursuit of that goal, the U.S. government invests approximately $81 billion annually for national intelligence.[5] Sun Tzu disciples, however, often miss the second part of his maxim: "know yourself."

This thesis aims to examine Sun Tzu's dictum in its entirety in order to uncover recurring and persistent patterns that will better prepare leaders for future conflict. It looks at both al-Qaeda and the U.S., but places emphasis on exploring America's understanding of its non-state adversary. This thesis looks at this understanding to examine America's historical propensity to misapprehend its enemy. Why and what do we keep getting wrong? What impedes our understanding of the adversary? And is Sun Tzu right? Does a better understanding matter for success? Using the Bush

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[1] Sun Tzu, *The Illustrated Art of War*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 205.

[2] Mary Habeck, *Knowing the Enemy: Jihadist Ideology and the War on Terror* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 5.

[3] Congressman Mac Thornberry, "Why a Conference on 9/11?" in *9/11 Ten Years Later: Insights on al-Qaeda's Past & Future Through Captured Records: Conference Proceedings*, eds. Lorry M. Fenner, Mark E. Stout and Jessica L. Goldings (Washington, DC: John Hopkins University Press, 2011), 21; U.S. Congressman Thornberry's biography is available at http://thornberry.house.gov/Biography/. (*Chicago*, 17.237)

[4] Eva Horn explained that at its core intelligence is about learning about "the other" and the enemy and not about oneself. Eva Horn, "Knowing the Enemy: The Epistemology of Secret Intelligence," *Grey Room*, no. 11 (Spring 2003): 60-61.

[5] Dana Priest and William Arkin, *Top Secret America: The Rise of the New American, Security State*, (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2011), 39.

Administration and the War on Terror as a case study, I explore these questions. In declaring the War on Terror, did the Bush administration misapprehend its avowed enemy, al-Qaeda? What, if anything, blinkered America's understanding of al-Qaeda?

To begin, it is useful to define what I mean when I use the terms "al-Qaeda" and "terrorism." Al-Qaeda is a terrorist organization. Terrorism scholars generally agree that terrorism is a deliberate violent act or the treat of such act targeting noncombatants or civilians for the purpose of inciting a psychological response such as fear or anger, sending a political message to a power (e.g. state and rival community), and affecting the target's behavior. Terrorists are simply individuals or groups, as opposed to states, who commit acts of terrorism as a form of political violence.[6] Al-Qaeda is more difficult to define. Al-Qaeda is not a fixed, monolithic, or concrete organization. In fact, some have described al-Qaeda as the ultimate "protean enemy" in that it is continuously morphing into new forms or embracing new causes.[7] It is a loose, dispersed, multinational network of individuals united by their shared ideology and operational objectives. Al-Qaeda is but one of many extremist groups that use religion and violence as means to advance their aims. The organization aspires to become an umbrella association, co-opting other movements. Using the term "al-Qaeda" to represent a unitary actor is clearly an oversimplification but appropriate in the context of this thesis as it reflects how America has come to understand al-Qaeda.

Some may argue that given the death of Osama bin Laden, the putative head of al-Qaeda in the period under review, and the lack of significant terrorist attacks over the past few years, discussions of al-Qaeda are passé. I chose to focus on America's historical understanding of al-Qaeda because I am interested in finding ways that American policies can improve.[8] Useful recommendations for improvement must begin

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[6] Louise Richardson, *What Terrorists Want* (New York: Random House, 2007), 2-10; Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York, N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 2006), 40-41.

[7] Jessica Stern, "The Protean Enemy," in *International Security Studies AY11 Coursebook*, edited by Sharon McBride (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, Aug 2010), 96.

[8] For literature on the end of al-Qaeda and its implications see Fawaz Gerges, *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda* (London: Oxford University Press, 2011); Jonathan Tepperman and Gideon Rose, eds., *The U.S. vs. al Qaeda*: *A History of the War on Terror* (New York: *Foreign Affairs* Publishing, 2011); Jason Burke, "Osama bin Laden's death: What now for al-Qaida?" *The Guardian*, 2 May 2011, http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/may/02/osama-bin-laden-future-of-al-qaida. (*Chicago*, 17.198); Daniel Byman, "OBL is Dead, Al Qaeda Isn't," *Foreign Policy*, 2 May 2011, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/05/02/obl_is_dead_al_qaeda_isnt?page=0,0. *Chicago*, 17.198);

with an accurate and critical appraisal. Understanding al-Qaeda's misunderstandings of America is interesting and important, but does not provide America any incentive to change or to conduct critical self-appraisal. My bias, however, does not in any way suggest that al-Qaeda had perfect or superior knowledge of America or that al-Qaeda's understanding of America is irrelevant. My bias is simply consistent with the objective of this project.

Additionally, studying America's experience with al-Qaeda is pertinent and significant for several reasons. First, this is the first post-Cold-War challenge directed intentionally at the world hegemon by a transnational, non-state actor. Second, al-Qaeda's attacks on the World Trade Center towers sparked the first war in the 21st century in which cyberspace and information operations were dominant features.[9] Lastly, the war represents a contest not for land, money, or resources, but for intangibles like security, honor, influence, and ideas. While I will provide some elaboration on these points, they are not my focus. My main objective is to investigate the extent of America's understanding of al-Qaeda.

Few books focus on explaining or understanding America's response to al-Qaeda's provocation.[10] While the literature is perceptive, most of it offers descriptive historical accounts. These works do not offer detailed, holistic analysis applicable and relevant outside the context of their current subject. This thesis aims to contribute to the small body of literature dedicated to understanding America's response to al-Qaeda and remains in keeping with the spirit of previous publications. It differs from these works in

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and Lisa Merriam, "The Al Qaeda Brand Died Last Week," Forbes, 10 June 2011, http://www.forbes.com/sites/realspin/2011/10/06/the-al-qaeda-brand-died-last-week/. (*Chicago*, 17.198)

[9] There is some debate about whether al-Qaeda's attacks and declaration constituted a war. As a non-state group, al-Qaeda's "declaration of war" against the United States in 1996 has moral value for its followers but it is legally meaningless as only states can declare war against one another. The phrase "War on Terror" was used mostly for domestic political purposes. Although President Bush sought Congress' authorization to use military force against the perpetrators of the 9/11, there was no formal declaration of war against the group. A more appropriate term to describe the violence between the United States and al-Qaeda is "conflict," although more recently the Obama Administration has preferred to call its actions as part of a "struggle against violent extremism."

[10] These books include: Stuart Croft, *Culture, Crisis and America's War on Terror* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Timothy J. Naftali, *Blind Spot: The Secret History of American Counterterrorism* (New York: Basic Books, 2005); John Mueller, *Overblown: How Politicians and the Terrorism Industry Inflate National Security Threats, and Why We Believe Them* (New York: Free Press, 2006); Dana Priest and William Arkin, *Top Secret America: The Rise of the New American, Security State*, (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2011); and Juan Williams, *Muzzled: The Assault on Honest Debate* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2011).

that it not only describes chronological historical developments, but also attempts to explain why things evolved as they did using theoretical frameworks with broad application.

I started my investigation looking for evidence of understanding in America's public discourse, public opinions, and government policies. These areas served as sites where understanding of al-Qaeda emerged, were refined, and became contested. Using primary and secondary sources, I surveyed the material to determine if evidence of cognitive impediments to understanding surfaced. I based my assessments on the cognitive pressures actors experienced at the time under review and not on revisionist interpretations.

Three theoretical frameworks informed my study of the cognitive impediments to understanding. These theories were groupthink, social identity, and cognitive closure. Groupthink and social identity explained how social dynamics might undermine individual's motivation to verify data by subordinating accuracy to the interests and the prerogatives of the group. In both groupthink and social identity, group cohesion takes precedence over accurate understanding. Similarly, cognitive closure causes psychological sclerosis that limits individuals' ability to see beyond a myopic perspective or understanding.

Groupthink, social identity, and cognitive closure are among many possible and plausible impediments to America's understanding of al-Qaeda. Other explanations include: a lack of available information; lack of American interest due to the initial relative size of the threat al-Qaeda posed; the Bush administration's manipulation of the al-Qaeda threat for political purposes; lack of historical precedence or interaction with the terrorist organization; al-Qaeda's disinformation campaign; a fluctuating and nebulous al-Qaeda ideology; and contradictory al-Qaeda actions and positions. In spite of these attractive choices, I selected to use groupthink, social identity, and cognitive closure because of their parsimony and broad application. In other words, these theories are straightforward and relevant not only to this thesis, but also for other historical examples and possibly future events.

Based on the research, I found that groupthink, social identity, and cognitive closure repeatedly frustrated America's understanding of al-Qaeda. In spite of these

psychological limitations, America was able to achieve its objectives and degrade al-Qaeda's capabilities. In other words, America's poor understanding of al-Qaeda did not prevent the nation's success or its ability to achieve its objectives.

This thesis consists of three main chapters. Chapter 1 provides the conceptual framework that undergirds the research. This chapter defines understanding and elaborates on public discourse, public opinion, and government policy as sites for observation. In the last section, it covers the theories of groupthink, social identity, and cognitive closure. Chapter 2 provides the historical background for the case study. It is divided into two main parts. The first part provides a history of Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda. It chronicles the evolution of al-Qaeda's ideology and the ascent of bin Laden as a terrorist icon. The second part looks at the Clinton Administration's response to the bin Laden and al-Qaeda threat. Chapter 3 presents the case study. It covers the period immediately after 11 September 2011, more commonly known in the United States as 9/11, until the end of President George W. Bush's second presidential term. It does not cover the attacks on 9/11 in detail, as the *9/11 Commission Report* thoroughly covers the subject. It does not provide a comprehensive review of the Iraq War, as that conflict is beyond the scope of this endeavor. The Iraq War is studied only as it pertains to al-Qaeda. The chapter is divided into three parts. The first part establishes the international and domestic context. The second part looks at public discourse, public opinion, and government policy for evidence of understanding. The theories of groupthink, social identity, and cognitive closure are applied in this segment. The last part examines how American actions affected al-Qaeda. In the concluding chapter, I review the implications of the findings and offer some recommendations.

It is perhaps America's folly sprinkled with a tinge of hubris that at times encourages Americans to see the world from only their perspective and assume it is a shared and correct perspective. Americans, like others, are fallible in their interpretations. The question remains, however, whether Americans are uniquely or catastrophically fallible to this lack of understanding. Though better self-awareness may not end current and future conflicts, it could enable Americans, at a minimum, to better understand their adversaries so that they effectively evaluate the outside world and keep threats and challenges in their proper proportions. Furthermore, having a better sense of their

cognitive disposition may moderate their need for quick and decisive responses, which have tended to exacerbate the challenges they attempt to deter or coerce. Although greater understanding is not a panacea or a guarantee for success, it remains a crucial force multiplier and enabler.

Chapter 1

Conceptual Framework

This chapter establishes a theoretical roadmap and framework that will guide our exploration into the case study of the Bush Administration and its war against al-Qaeda. I begin by defining understanding. Then I look at public discourse, public opinion, and government policy as valuable repositories for evidence of understanding. Lastly, I consider three impediments to understanding: groupthink, social identity, and cognitive closure. Although alternate attractive theoretical lenses exist, given the limited scope of this project, I selected to focus on these three perspectives because of their broad application and parsimony. These theories apply not only for the current case study under review but may also apply to other historical as well as future cases.

Defining Understanding

This thesis is fundamentally about understanding the enemy or the "other"—specifically al-Qaeda. Yet "understanding" itself is a source of misunderstanding. Scholars and philosophers have not reached a consensus on what it means to understand.[1] In the interest of brevity, I will draw on the works of Norwegian psychologist and professor Geir Overskeid, German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Hunter College professor of psychology Salomon Rettig to develop a working definition of understanding.

Traditionally, to say one understands a group, a person, or a phenomenon implies that one can perform certain tasks. One who understands can satisfactorily describe the object of his understanding. He can explain the observed action and provide insights into the causes that led to the subject's action or emotion. Those who understand can reasonably predict how "the other" will react or what his next course of action is likely to be. In response, this informed analyst can suggest counter moves that will undermine or complement the subject depending on the strategic goals of interest.[2]

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[1] Geir Overskeid, "Empirically Understanding Understanding Can Make Problems Go Away: The Case of the Chinese Room," *Psychological Record* 55, no. 4 (Fall 2005): 601.
[2] Overskeid, 601.

The traditional definition of understanding remains valid but it is incomplete. For the purpose of this thesis, I define understanding as a mental state that one consciously reaches by synthesizing his views with those of his community to come to agreement about commonly perceived social facts about "the other."[3] As Rettig suggested, social facts are not so much facts as they are socially constructed interpretations and meanings. These realities result from the process of evaluating evidence and conducting a normative deliberation to address a collective concern.[4] In the case of terrorism, the common interest is how to defeat al-Qaeda and keep America safe. The normative deliberation consists of discussions on what is just, morally appropriate, and efficacious.[5] In constructing the understanding, an individual tries to cobble together a complete picture based on piecemeal, uncertain, and conflicting information. In the end, he comes to an understanding that includes his subject's history, societal context, interests, and biases and integrates "unfamiliar, strange or anomalous" information.[6]

Because perfect knowledge is unattainable, sufficient knowledge must be enough. Sufficient knowledge, however, is not a guarantee for understanding. For instance, Bernard Lewis, the British historian and Middle East expert, knows many facts on the Middle East, Islam, and its history. Yet his understanding of the region and its peoples came into question when he endorsed America's efforts to forcibly promote democracy in Iraq.[7] Knowing many things about a subject does not equate to understanding the subject. Inversely, not knowing much about a subject does not necessarily mean one cannot understand. Generally, Americans know little about the political candidates they

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[3] Solomon Rettig, "Discursive Psychology: A Human Foible?" in *Ethical Human Psychology and Psychiatry* 7, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 93.

[4] This statement does not suggest that society only understands things that it is concerned about. Society is not a monolithic collective and is diverse. Segments of society can understand different issues without there being general concern. When, however, a concern rises to the threshold that it impacts most members of the society, then that concern becomes a collective concern and requires a negotiated and shared understanding.

[5] Solomon, 94.

[6] *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* s.v. "Hans-Georg Gadamer," http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/gadamer/ (accessed 22 February 2012). (*Chicago*, 17.237)

[7] Richard W. Bulliet, *The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006); Michael Hirsh, "Bernard Lewis Revisited: What is Islam isn't an obstacle to democracy in the Middle East but the secret to achieving it," *Washington Monthly*, November 2004, http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/2004/0411.hirsh.html. (*Chicago*, 17.237); and Ian Buruma, "Lost in Translation," *The New Yorker*, 14 June 2004, http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2004/06/14/040614crbo_books?currentPage=all. (*Chicago*, 17.187)

vote for, but they believe that voting is important.[8] In 2008, African-Americans voted in record numbers for President Barak Obama.[9] While many were familiar with Obama's policies and positions, others voted for him simply because he was African-American.[10]

Understanding comes in degrees and usually involves acquiring sufficient and relevant knowledge. It may also require emotional incentives to reach the goal of understanding "the other" or the phenomena. Often such knowledge also entails monitoring observable behaviors that might confirm the extent of understanding.[11] Sufficient knowledge is the threshold of knowledge necessary to enable one to act or make a decision. A friend may share details about his financial troubles, and then ask your advice about how to go about improving his predicament. But in spite of the friend's confidences, you may not feel you have sufficient knowledge to make a recommendation. As discussed previously, you can give advice without having sufficient knowledge. There has to be an acknowledgement that you may not have all the information or the motivation to acquire that information to facilitate an informed judgment. Without such motivation, there is a possibility that the understanding may be based on incorrect knowledge and, thus, result in a flawed or limited understanding.[12]

In sum, understanding is useful in solving problems or disagreements. A disagreement emerges when a current state does not align with a desired state.[13] The current state may be nearing financial collapse and the desired state is financial stability. Understanding is the toolbox that contains the resources to help remedy the current state and transform it to the desired state. Better understanding does not enable one to control what the other does. Actors retain their agency. Put differently, individuals are resistant to control. They retain their freedom of choice and act in accordance with their interests and

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[8] Michael Schudson, "America's Ignorant Voters," *Wilson Quarterly* 24, no. 2 (Spring 2000): 16-23.
[9] Mark Blumenthal, "President Obama's Job Approval Ratings Remain High Among Black Voters," *Huffington Post*, 10 October 2011, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/10/10/obama-black-voters-jobs-approval-ratings_n_1003973.html. (*Chicago*, 17.187)
[10] Inside Obama's Sweeping Victory, *Pew Research Center for the People & the Press*, 5 November 2008, http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1023/exit-poll-analysis-2008. (*Chicago*, 17.237); Caitlin McDevitt, "Samuel L. Jackson rants about Obama, race," *Politico*, 11 February 2012, http://www.politico.com/blogs/click/2012/02/samuel-l-jackson-rants-about-obama-race-114201.html. (*Chicago*, 17.187); and Alex Johnson, "Barak Obama elected 44th president," *MSNBC.com*, 5 November 2008, http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/27531033/ns/politics-decision_08/t/barack-obama-elected-th-president/#.T0bsjX1UXik. (*Chicago*, 17.198)
[11] Overskeid, 595-617.
[12] Overskeid, 601-611.
[13] Overskeid, 608.

calculations. Also, understanding a problem does not necessarily mean you can solve the problem. Some problems are intractable. Nonetheless, better understanding helps to more effectively direct one's actions to achieve desirable results. Perfect understanding, like perfect intelligence, does not exist and is not a panacea for solving all problems. Nevertheless, better understanding can help minimize counterproductive actions, avoid wasteful use of resources, and more appropriately and optimally direct efforts. In other words, using our understanding of the individual's financial records and habits as well as the situation allows us to offer appropriately tailored prescriptions that can assist him to change from an irresponsible spender to a responsible financial manager. Similarly, in America's war against al-Qaeda, the goal of American leaders was a secure America. To achieve this goal, American decision-makers determined that they must destroy al-Qaeda. Better understanding al-Qaeda would presumably increase the chances that America could achieve its goal. Conversely, a low degree of understanding would presumably make it more difficult for America to achieve its security.

Public Discourse, Public Opinion, and Government Policies

Public discourse, public opinion, and government policy are valuable repositories for evidence of understanding. Understanding informs America's behavior in both words and deeds. Public discourse and public opinion capture America's words. Government policies capture its deeds. The artifacts found in these areas provide insight into how well America understood al-Qaeda.[14] While multiple and conflicting understandings of al-Qaeda exist, through the interplay of public discourse, public opinion, and government policy dominant understandings of al-Qaeda emerge. In other words, public discourse, public opinion, and government policy are not independent or mutually exclusive; they interact, influence, and shape each other. Because of their mutually reinforcing linkages, these repositories provide an opportunity to gather and to record the evolution of understanding.

More specifically, the extent of America's understanding of al-Qaeda is echoed in its public discourse. America's first reaction to al-Qaeda was discourse. It informed and

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[14] Artifacts are the things that humans conceive and create that reflect their understanding, ideas, values, and beliefs. Examples of artifacts include books, newspaper articles, radio commentaries, television programs, web blogs, murals, or plays.

set the parameters for discussion on a social problem; for example, "If Osama bin Laden is So Bad, Why is He Free?" or "Why do they [Muslims] Hate Us?" The questions and talks are evidence of the "creation and contestation" process involved in formulating collective truths or answers to social dilemmas.[15] *Webster's Dictionary* defines discourse as a verbal exchange of ideas using spoken and written communication.[16] Public discourse takes place in newspapers, radio talk shows, and television broadcasts. In other words, popular mass media sites are where public discourse occurs. These sites attract a large and disparate audience.[17] The conversations are initiated, led, and sustained by elites. The elite are members of the government administration, congressmen, lobbyists, media personalities, academics, and other sources of expert opinion.[18] Members of academia enjoy greater influence on public opinion and the debate than other elites. A recent study suggests that foreign elites also influence American public opinion provided that the mass media provides these external elites sufficient coverage and access to reach the masses.[19]

Through discourse, preexisting notions clash with new concepts and new understandings emerge. Paul Edwards, a professor at the University of Michigan's School of Information, wrote that discourse is fundamentally about creating meaning and producing knowledge. Discourse goes beyond the mere act of conversing. It produces knowledge sets that are self-contained units consisting of associated assumptions, interpretations of reality, applicable metaphors, and prescriptions for action.[20]

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[15] Bruce W. Nelan, Douglas Waller, and Rahimullah Yusufza, "If Osama bin Laden's So Bad, Why is He Free?" *Time Magazine*, 24 August 1998, http://www.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,988976,00.html (*Chicago*, 17.187); Stephen Ellingson, "Understanding the Dialectic of Discourse and Collective Action: Public Debate and Rioting in Antebellum Cincinnati" in *American Journal of Sociology* 101, no. 1 (July 1995): 107.

[16] *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed., s.v. "discourse."

[17] Philip J. Powlick and Andrew Z. Katz, "Defining the American Public Opinion/Foreign Policy Nexus" in *Mershon International Studies Review* 42 (1998): 34, 39.

[18] Powlick and Katz, 34, 39.

[19] Danny Hayes and Matt Guardino, "The Influence of Foreign Voices on U.S. Public Opinion" in *American Journal of Political Science* 55, no. 4 (October 2011): 830.

[20] Paul Edwards quoted in Antoine Bousquet, *The Scientific Way of Warfare: Order and Chaos on the Battlefields of Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 14. Edwards wrote, 'Discourse goes beyond speech acts to refer to the entire field of signifying or meaningful practices: these social interactions – material, institutional, and linguistic – through which human knowledge is produced and reproduced. A discourse then, is a way of knowledge, a background of assumptions and agreements about how reality is to be interpreted and expressed, supported by paradigmatic metaphors, technologies and potentially embodied in social institutions.'

Alternatively, public discourse is a socialization process that helps form new social realities and understanding by organizing, prioritizing, and selecting information collectively accepted as truth. The emergent understanding reflects the stimuli that sparked the discourse; answers the who, what, where, when and why questions about al-Qaeda; and prescribes and legitimizes America's response. Initial reaction to new information can result in cycles of disharmony in the public discourse, but consensus can also exist. During times of war, when a clear external threat is identified, there is consensus in public discourse due to societal and cognitive pressure to maintain national unity.[21]

While public discourse generally showcases elites' understanding, public opinion mirrors the general public's understanding. Learning about "the other" is resource intensive. It requires access to accurate and pertinent information as well as time. Consequently, the public generally remains passive and defers to the media and government elites to guide their understanding.[22] Public opinion becomes energized when the mass media and elites highlight an issue or event that resonates and is relevant to the general public's interests.[23] Once public opinion is active, it selects and adopts one of the competing elite narratives. Thus, public opinion is a byproduct of public discourse and emerges from the interactive process of elite debates, negotiations, compromises, and consensus-building. American public opinion reflects the beliefs, values, biases, and judgments of the collective at a particular time and within a specific context.[24] It is not necessarily a reflection of facts. Like public discourse, it can show signs of consensus and polarization. American public opinion is often divided along party lines (Republican or Democrat) and individual identity lines (race or gender).

Public opinion polls provide a snapshot of what America is thinking; it can be fickle and change as situations change. These polls reflect the current mood of the

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[21] Consensus during war is not a foregone conclusion. Public discourse during the Vietnam War was fractured. Nevertheless, it generally holds true that when groups face a tangible threat from an external force, they will unite to repel and resist the intruder. Following the Pearl Harbor attacks in December 1941, the country rallied and mobilized to fight an identifiable enemy – Japan.

[22] Danny Hayes and Matt Guardino, "The Influence of Foreign Voices on U.S. Public Opinion" in *American Journal of Political Science* 55, no. 4 (October 2011): 830-850.

[23] Powlick and Katz, 31-34.

[24] Yaacov Shamir, "What is Public Opinion and Why is it Important to Conflict Resolution," in *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics & Culture*, 1 September 2004; Jürgen Habernas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991).

country as well as its judgment of perceived reality. Polling data is represented in percentages and depicts the opinions of a sampling of the public opinion writ large. The results from the survey of opinions are extrapolated to represent the population within a certain margin of error.

Pollsters can also make issues salient or create public opinion. They do this by their subject selection and question framing. Questions may contain ambiguous words like "effective" or hints like "good or challenged" that persuade participants to answer in a particular manner. How questions are worded and ordered, who asks the questions, and who participates in the surveys can greatly skew the results. The participants' answers are also subject to misinterpretation or arbitrary interpretation.[25] The polls may show an illusion of consensus because of the need for standardization and simplification that ignores the diversity of opinions. Additionally, Richard Vatz, a professor of rhetoric and communication, has argued that election polls may result in inaccurate statistics that encourage a trend that did not exist and thereby become a self-fulfilling prophesy. A poll that shows a politician is trailing badly discourages current and future sponsors from making donations. That politician loses because his sponsors trust the polling data and are unwilling to take the financial and political risks.[26] In other words, polls can be imprecise and inconclusive. Another contentious issue is that public opinion does not emerge spontaneously and in a vacuum. It develops from the society and is influenced by the institutions and other characteristics of that society. So the media, the political infrastructure, and the education system all influence and help shape public opinion because they are sources of information on which public opinion depends. Consequently, there may be as many public opinions as there are cable news television channels and polling companies.[27]

How well America comprehends al-Qaeda is evident in its deeds or government policies. As Alexander Wendt has postulated, how one conceives of "the other" determines how one will behave and make policy choices. While Wendt's focus was on international relations among states, his ideas are applicable in state-non-state dyads as

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[25] Richard E. Vatz, "Of What Value Are Public Opinion Polls?" *USA Today Magazine* 134, no. 2732 (May 2006): 64.

[26] Vatz, 64.

[27] Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc., 1922).

well. Wendt identified three cultures of anarchy or perspectives of "the other" in international relations: Hobbesian (enmity), Lockean (rival), and Kantian (friendship). America's relationship with al-Qaeda resembles Wendt's Hobbesian culture. Al-Qaeda is an enemy and not a rival. Wendt noted that in a Hobbesian culture the protagonist and the antagonist mirror each other. The enemy engages in unlimited warfare, so the nation is compelled to also fight an unlimited warfare to ensure its survival. Wendt said, "The point is that whether or not states really are existential threats to each other is in one sense not relevant, since once a logic of enmity gets started states will behave in ways that make them existential threats, thus the behavior itself becomes part of the problem. This gives enemy-images [*sic*] a homeostatic quality that sustains the logic of Hobbesian anarchies."[28] In other words, once America decided that al-Qaeda was its enemy bent on its destruction, it tended to embrace the identical objective of annihilating the adversary. America's actions were consistent with its objectives and spurred similar responses from al-Qaeda. The situation became a self-fulfilling prophecy and perpetuated an endless spiral of action followed by reaction. Under these conditions, an accurate understanding of "the other" was difficult because the cognitive lenses cloud America's ability to see an image other than an exaggeratedly powerful, hostile, monolithic, and unchanging enemy. Alternatively, absent from America's calculation was a thorough assessment of not only the enemy's intentions but also their capabilities and ability to destroy America. Wendt added that the more the state's identity becomes dependent on its relationship with "the other," and the more national interests become invested in maintaining the Hobbesian status quo, "the more resistant to change it [the logic] will be."[29]

Generally, government policies take public discourse and public opinion into consideration. An activated public opinion due to increased public discourse facilitates or constrains American government policy. The authors of a 2005 RAND study claimed that "presidents can find that an unfavorable public opinion environment ultimately constrains the range of politically acceptable policies for successfully concluding a

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[28] Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 263.
[29] Wendt, 278.

military operation."[30] In cases where public opinion is dormant, policy makers will make policies that take into account their understanding of the issue. In addition, the decision is based on their assumption of what public opinion is likely to tolerate should public opinion becomes animated once a decision is finalized.[31] In the event of emergencies, such as war, the president can enjoy greater leeway provided he or she is seen to be taking action. During these periods, the nation may experience a "rally-around-the-flag" consensus in both public opinion and public discourse.[32] The president may gain a free hand to pursue his policies with minimal scrutiny. The reduced scrutiny results in policies that lack critical vetting and may be founded consequently on weak or faulty assumptions. Once policies are established, the president and his administration become invested in seeing their policy sustained, so they are unlikely to change the policy until and unless there is a public-opinion consensus equal or greater than 60 percent demanding a change.[33] Government policy that is formed in a contested environment is forced to accurately assess the threat or face criticisms, which it must refute. When such an environment does not exist, the probability of misunderstanding increases, as there is no balancing mechanism to challenge policy makers to consider alternate interpretations.

Groupthink, Social Identity, and Cognitive Closure

Groupthink can be a primary impediment to understanding. The late research psychologist Irving L. Janis found that members of groups often succumb to in-group pressures. In-group pressures can cause degradation in mental processing, disregard of facts, and lapses in moral judgment. As individuals socialize into cohesive groups, the tendency to achieve and maintain group coherence increases. The more tightly knit the group becomes, the greater its cohesion. Increased cohesion increase the likelihood that members' and leaders' decision-making may become defective, because there is a tendency for the members to seek to maintain group coherence at the expense of critical-thinking and reality-verification. This development, neglect of critical assessments and reality, is a symptom of groupthink. When a group is affected by groupthink, individuals

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[30] Eric V. Larson and Bogdan Savych, *American Support for U.S. Military Operations from Mogadishu to Baghdad* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2005), xvii. http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2005/RAND_MG231.pdf. (*Chicago*, 12.237)
[31] Powlick and Katz, 44.
[32] Powlick and Katz, 51.
[33] Powlick and Katz, 49.

may begin to self-censure and suppress their individual thoughts and analysis in the presence of the group. Individuals from the group self-select and serve the role of mindguards or protectors to defend and to preserve the integrity of the consensus. Contrarian ideas, information, or perspectives are perceived as threats and are dismissed, blocked, or attacked. In addition to pressures toward uniformity, Janis noted that other symptoms of groupthink include overestimation of the group and closed-mindedness. In this environment, understanding becomes retarded and does not necessarily reflect sound judgment, but rather the consensus.[34]

Social identity helps explain another impediment to understanding, specifically how cognitive biases may cloud rational thinking. Social identity is the perspective that there exist distinguishing features that classify an individual as belonging to one distinct social class as opposed to another. This membership comes with emotional and value attachments. The individual comes to represent the group and not solely his individual interests. Social psychologists Henri Tajfel and John Turner developed social-identity theory and suggested that once individuals are categorized into various groupings, they tend to develop in-group biases because of the natural tendency for high self-esteem and relative superiority over others. Subsequently, individuals articulate positive affirmations regarding the in-group and express negative assertions of the out-group or other. "The other" is used as a contrast and helps formulate the in-group identity. As the individual begins to identify more with the group, his level of animosity towards the out-group increases. Also, individuals who identify closely with the group tend to enforce rigid requirements for in-group membership and serve to discourage compromise between and within groups. When faced with a perceived threat, this inclination is exacerbated due to security concerns. As a result, individuals cling fervently to their identity and those of the in-group while demonizing and delegitimizing "the other" to galvanize stronger in-group cohesion and preservation. In the end, social identity often leads to caricatures of "the other" and, consequently, flawed understanding.[35]

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[34] Irving L. Janis, *Groupthink* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1982), 8-9, 244-245. Of note, Janis clarified: "group cohesiveness does not invariably lead to symptoms of groupthink. It is a necessary condition, but it is not a sufficient condition." Other factors such as leadership and how isolated the group is to outside opinions and perspectives also impact the development of groupthink.

[35] Henri Tajfel and John Turner, "The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behavior," in *Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, eds. Stephen Worchel and William G. Austin (Chicago, IL: Nelson Hall, 1986), 7-24.

Premature cognitive closure also frustrates comprehension. According to political psychologist Robert Jervis, premature cognitive closure is a psychological phenomenon that occurs when individuals settle on an understanding of a subject in the presence of competing interpretations and information before they fully evaluate and incorporate the available data to arrive at accurate and reasonable conclusions.[36] Premature understanding based on minimal information is likely when "the other" is perceived to resemble a known stereotype; when "the other" behaves in an expected manner and in accordance with conventional norms; and, when there is pressure to quickly assess "the other" as in times of war. Once one formulates an understanding of "the other," the tendency to disregard subsequent information persists regardless of the accuracy of the information or whether it invalidates one's current understanding. Jervis noted that the primacy effect or first impression is lasting and difficult to change. The rigidity and inability to get beyond the initial impression on a subject are signs of premature cognitive closure. The psychological satisfaction that comes with cognitive closure also serves as an inhibitor to accurate but discordant information. Maintaining consistency once closure is achieved is psychologically more comforting than the embarrassment of admitting error by evaluating new information and challenging current beliefs. Political imperatives also exacerbate the need for consistency following closure. Consequently, new information is often interpreted and distorted to conform to current perspectives or beliefs. Previous beliefs and understandings exert a masking effect on the external stimuli and thwart the crystallization of or adjustment to more accurate perceptions of "the other." While over time new information, which invalidates the understanding, may result in change, premature cognitive closure delays change as it encourages resistance to new information. Jervis postulated that this retardation causes actors to "proceed longer down

A copy Tajfel and Turner's chapter is also available from http://faculty.kent.edu/updegraffj/gradsocial/readings/tajfel.pdf. (*Chicago*, 17.237); Tyler M. Curley, "Social Identity Theory and EU Expansion," *International Studies Quarterly* 53, no. 3 (September 2009): 651-654.

[36] Robert Jervis is actually a political scientist and teaches at Columbia University. He has written extensively on psychology and international relations. He is not necessarily a trained psychologist. In 2004, he received the Lasswell Award for "distinguished scientific contribution in the field of political psychology." International Society of Political Psychology, "Harold Lasswell Award," http://www.ispp.org/awards/lasswell. (Chicago: 17.237).

blind alleys before they realize that their basic assumptions need revision."[37] In other words, once cognitive closure sets in, understanding is at best delayed and at worst stifled. Nevertheless, Jervis suggested, it is possible to study the cognitive processes that lead to understanding as well as its impediments: "Perceptions of the world and of other actors diverge from reality in patterns that we can detect and for reasons that we can understand. We can find both misperceptions that are common to diverse kinds of people and important differences in perception. … This knowledge can be used not only to explain specific decisions but also to account for patterns of interaction and to improve our general understanding."[38]

Conclusion

Understanding is a mental state that one consciously reaches by fusing his and his community's views into an agreed and shared perspective about "the other." Understanding serves to inform actions and decisions by providing signposts to what activities ameliorate and worsen current problems. A problem exists when the current state is incongruent with the desired state or is congruent with the worst imaginable state. Understanding provides the cognitive map that helps one traverse the adaptive and complex interactions of belligerents.

Evidence of understanding is found in public discourse, public opinion, and government policy. In public discourse, understanding is actively developed and refined in the marketplace of ideas through negotiation. Public opinion mirrors the dynamics of public discourse and the resultant understanding. Government policy is putting the emergent understanding to action. Understanding drives the subsequent behaviors and decisions.

The path to understanding, however, can be derailed by groupthink, social identity, and cognitive closure. Groupthink diverts focus from the subject in need of understanding and makes maintaining consensus and group cohesion the priority. While its mechanism differs, social identity causes effects similar to those of groupthink and prioritizes group cohesion. Social identity encourages maintaining cohesion by

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[37] Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 191. For more information on cognitive dissonance, read Jervis, 188-194.
[38] Jervis, 3.

establishing and enforcing clear in-group and out-group criteria. The in-group is exalted and immune from criticism, whereas the out-group is demonized and inherently bad. In social identity, accurate understanding of "the other" loses its importance. What is important is maintaining the stark distinction between the groups, which can lead to absurd absolutism. "The other" is evil and incomprehensible. Adherence to such absolutism obstructs one's ability to see nuances, which are essential for greater clarity in understanding. Lastly, cognitive closure is reaching a firm and expedient understanding on a topic and resisting contrary information and distorting discordant data that may necessitate a reevaluation of the current understanding.

The subsequent chapters build on this conceptual framework. Chapter 2 provides the historical background that broadly frames the case study. In Chapter 3, these cognitive concepts are applied to the Bush Administration and its "War on Terror." To reiterate, ideal understanding is knowledge that is used to get America closer to its desired or goal state – a secure America – and further away from its worst or undesirable state – an America in peril. America considers the destruction of al-Qaeda as a necessary means to achieve its end goal. The case study should highlight what role, if any, understanding has played toward this end.

Chapter 2

Historical Background

America's history with modern transnational terrorism pre-dates the presidency of George W. Bush by almost a half-century.[1] Since the 1960's, Middle Eastern groups, such as the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) were America's main foreign terrorist threats. America's air transportation industry was particularly vulnerable.[2] Some saw airline hijackers as modern-day Barbary pirates.[3] Unlike the days of the Barbary pirates and subsequent wars, however, America did not declare war on terrorism and unsheathe its military saber. American counterterrorism measures and policies evolved gradually and in parallel with the increasing number of terrorist activities. The year 1983 was a watershed in America's history with terrorism. Hezbollah's suicide bombing of the Marine headquarters in Beirut, Lebanon, in October of that year brought the total number of Americans killed from terrorist attacks in 1983 to more than 250, which set a tragic new benchmark.[4] In 1985, President Ronald Regan declared, "There can be no place on Earth

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[1] According to Bruce Hoffman, a Georgetown University professor who has studied terrorism for more than 30 years, modern international terrorism began in 1968 when the PLO used transportation and information technology advantages to inform their tactics. On 22 July 1968, the PLO hijacked an Israeli commercial aircraft and used the act to internationalize their political grievances against Israel through the global media. Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 63-64.

[2] Tim Naftali, *Blind Spot: The Secret History of American Counterterrorism* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 37. In 1968, 22 airline hijackings occurred; there were only 5 the previous year.

[3] This was presidential hopeful Walter Mondale's view in 1976. Tom Wicker, "Candidates talking tough on terrorism," *New York Times*, 21 July 1976, 4, available from http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1314&dat=19760721&id=WfdLAAAAIBAJ&sjid=ne0DAAAAI BAJ&pg=6800,1858840. (*Chicago*, 17.198) The Barbary Coast consists of the North African areas of Morocco, Libya (Tripoli), Tunisia (Tunis), and Algeria (Algiers). The Barbary pirates began to target American merchant ships in the Atlantic in 1793. They took the ships, merchandise, and men for ransom. Captured persons were also sold in slave markets in the Barbary States. To address the problem the U.S. paid tributes to the Barbary States. In 1801, Tripoli tried to extort a larger tribute from the U.S. In response, President Thomas Jefferson dispatched the US Navy to protect the merchant ships and fought the Tripolitan War from 1802 to 1805. Allan R. Millett and Peter Maslowski, *For the Common Defense* (New York: The Free Press, 1984), 99, 104-105.

[4] President Ronald Reagan, "Message to the Congress Transmitting Proposed Legislation To Combat International Terrorism," *American Presidency Project*, 26 April 1984, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=39829&st=ronald+reagan&st1=terrorism#ixzz1u8G3s Qwe. (*Chicago*, 17.237) On 23 October 1983, a truck bomb crashed into the US Marine headquarters in Beirut, Lebanon, killing 239 marines. American forces were in Lebanon as part of United Nation peacekeeping operations during the Lebanese civil war. Elizabeth Picard, *Lebanon a Shattered Country* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 2002), 126. Shortly after the attack, US forces withdrew

left where it is safe for these monsters to rest, or train, or practice their cruel and deadly skills. We must act together, or unilaterally, if necessary, to ensure that terrorists have no sanctuary-anywhere."[5]

Thirteen years later, President Bill Clinton echoed Reagan's declaration. "There will be no sanctuary for terrorists," threatened Clinton.[6] In the 1990s, Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda emerged as America's latest, and most dangerous, terrorist threat. This chapter provides the background story of al-Qaeda and American counterterrorism efforts against the organization prior to the September 2001 attacks. It is divided into two sections. The first charts the ascendancy of bin Laden from volunteer holy fighter to iconic leader of transnational terrorism. In this section, I also examine al-Qaeda's ideology as a lineal descendant of Islamic reform movements and thoughts from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Palestine. The second section looks at President Clinton's counterterrorism efforts against al-Qaeda. This historical background is important to appreciate the challenges and policy tools President Bush inherited.

Osama bin Laden and Al-Qaeda

Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990 had a profound impact on Saudi Arabia. Bin Laden and many Saudis feared and predicted that Saddam would also attack Saudi Arabia. In September, bin Laden approached the Saudi government and offered to raise an army of *mujahedeen* (fighters) to defend the kingdom.[7] The Kingdom's government declined his offer. Instead, it accepted America's offer of assistance. To legitimate its decision, the Saudi state *ulema* (the religious scholars) published a *fatwa*

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from Lebanon. Groups like Hamas and al-Qaeda viewed Hezbollah's tactic as a success worthy of replication.

[5] Naftali, 166.

[6] "U.S. Fury on 2 Continents; Clinton's Words: 'There Will Be No Sanctuary for Terrorists,' *The New York Times*, 21 August 1998, http://www.nytimes.com/1998/08/21/world/us-fury-2-continents-clinton-s-words-there-will-be-no-sanctuary-for-terrorists.html. (*Chicago*, 17.198)

[7] At this point, bin Laden was already a celebrity in Saudi Arabia. He was the Saudi face encouraging Saudis to make financial contributions to the Afghan Arabs in their fight against the Soviet Union during the 1980s. The Saudi government welcomed and supported bin Laden in this capacity as it reflected favorably on the government as a pious state supporting a fellow Muslim state. The Saudi government's credibility was precarious following the November 1979 takeover of the *Masjid al Haram* (Grand Mosque) by Juhaiman ibn Muhammad ibn Saif al Otaibi and his followers. Juhaiman held pilgrims hostage at the mosque and accused the Saudi government of corruption for its close affiliation with the West and adaptation of Western practices. Omar Saghi, "Osama bin Laden, the Iconic Orator," in *Al Qaeda in its Own Words*, ed. by Gilles Kepel and Jean-Pierre Milelli (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 17.

(religious ruling) authorizing the Saudi state to declare *jihad* against Iraq and to accept American assistance.

The Saudi government's decision, backed by the *ulema*'s *fatwa*, drew strong condemnation from within Saudi Arabia. America was the quintessential *kufr* (infidel)*;* allowing armed American men and women on the land of Islam's holiest cities was inconceivable and infuriating to bin Laden and others who had spent the last decade fighting or supporting the fight of Muslims against the *kufr* forces of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. The decision by the House of Saud to let Americans into their country contradicted, in the minds of bin Laden and others, the teachings of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1792), the father of the Saudi state's religion. According to al-Wahhab, Jews and Christians are *kufr* and deserve death. Wahhabism called for the purification of Islam's holiest land from Western presence and influence. Now, rather than purge the growing Western influence in Saudi Arabia, the state welcomed the intrusion. Doctor Safar al-Hawali, a respected Saudi scholar, was one of the Saudi government's most vociferous critics. He called for domestic changes and removing the internal infidels or corrupt Saudi government officials and the *ulema*. He was summarily imprisoned along with other scholars who challenged the government policies.[8]

The arrests and imprisonment of opposition scholars was the *coup de grâce* that changed bin Laden's view of the Saudi government. Bin Laden commented, "When the Saudi government transgressed in oppressing all voices of the scholars and the voices of those who call for Islam I found myself forced … to carry out a small part of my duty of enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong."[9] He began to publically voice his disapproval of the monarchy and was placed under house arrest.[10] In 1991, bin Laden fled his homeland and began his *jihad* against Saudi Arabia and later the West. After staying in Pakistan for a few months, he moved to Sudan in December 1991.[11]

It is during his time in Sudan that bin Laden attracted America's attention. In 1989, the Islamic National Salvation Revolution Party seized power in Sudan in a military coup. The new radical Islamist government in Sudan welcomed bin Laden, who

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[8] Jason Burke, *Al Qaeda: The True Story of Radical Islam* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 138-139.
[9] Burke, 139.
[10] Burke, 156. In 1994, Saudi Arabia stripped bin Laden of his citizenship and froze his assets.
[11] Abdel Bari Atwan, *The Secret History of al Qaeda* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006), 47.

was celebrated for his role during the Afghan *jihad* as a wealthy and generous patron.[12] Bin Laden began to invest in Sudan's infrastructure. He provided funds to build an airport, highways, and businesses.[13] His activities went beyond philanthropic endeavors. He also funded terrorist operations and became known as "the venture capitalist of Terror" within American intelligence circles.[14] Bin Laden continued his activities unimpeded until 1995. In June 1995, al-Gamaa al-Islamiyya, a Khartoum-based cell, attempted to assassinate Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak.[15] In November, Islamic Jihad, also based in Khartoum, bombed and leveled the Egyptian embassy in Pakistan.[16] That same month, Saudi Arabia experienced its first al-Qaeda-related terrorist attack.[17] A bomb, placed outside a Pentagon-leased building for American contractors, exploded in Riyadh killing five Americans. Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and America demanded that Sudan cease its support of terrorist groups and individuals.[18] The international pressure to expel the terrorists became unbearable for Sudan. Sudan's president Omar al-Bashir told bin Laden he was welcomed to stay in Sudan, but the government could no longer guarantee his safety.[19] In May 1996, bin Laden relocated to Afghanistan.

In Afghanistan, bin Laden's philosophy crystallized. He blended ideas from Wahhabism, the Muslim Brotherhood, and Abdallah Azzam into a new formulation for international *jihad*.[20] In the 1700's, Al-Wahhab advocated a strict interpretation of

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[12] Burke, 58, 79, 144-145. Bin Laden's father was a wealthy businessman and reported to have left as much as $300 million for the family upon his death in 1967. Bin Laden had access to millions of dollars, but an exact authoritative figure is unknown. Bin Laden began to travel to Pakistan to support the Afghan War in 1980 at the age of 23. From 1980 to 1984, he travelled between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia intermittently. By the end of 1984, he spent most of his time in Pakistan. While there he focused his efforts on establishing a network for recruiting and fundraising for the Afghan *jihad*. He used his family connections and wealth to ship construction equipment to build training camps, tunnels and roads in Afghanistan. He built his own camp, *al-Ma'asada* (the Lion's Den) in 1989 in Jaji, located in northeastern Afghanistan. Bin Laden engaged in battle in Chaprihar, southeast of Jalalabad, Afghanistan. In 1986, he was also engaged in fighting in Jaji, Khost, and Jalabad.

[13] Atwan, 47-48, 52-53.

[14] Faftali, 251. At this stage, the CIA was tracking bin Laden and not necessarily the entire Intelligence Community.

[15] Faftali, 255. This was not an al-Qaeda cell. Members of al-Gamaa al-Islamiyya cooperated with bin Laden, but were not, at this time, members of his organization.

[16] Burke, 115, 154.

[17] Burke, 154.

[18] Burke, 156. In 1993, the U.S. added Sudan to the list of state sponsor of terror.

[19] Atwan, 50.

[20] Jim Lacey, ed., *The Cannons of Jihad: Terrorists' Strategy for Defeating America* (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2008), 176. Abu Musad al-Suri, one of al-Qaeda's most prominent strategic thinkers, wrote, "…there was a group around him [bin Laden] who were inspired by an ideology that consisted of an

shari'a (Islamic law) and monotheism (*tawhid* – doctrine of oneness of God).[21] He called for a *tali'a* (vanguard) to lead reforms and preached that Muslims needed to purify Islam and the *ummah* of innovations and foreign influence and return to the practices of the Prophet Mohammed. Al-Wahhab also embraced the practice of *takfiri* or denouncing fellow Muslims as *kufr* if they disagreed with his interpretation of Islam.[22] In Wahhabism, *jihad* assumed prominence and legitimated attacking fellow Muslims. Wahhabis cite the Prophet's saying that "Jihad is the ultimate manifestation of Islam. ... It is a furnace in which Muslims are melted out and which allows the separation of the bad [Muslims] from the good one."[23]

In Egypt, Hassan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb lobbied for reform. Al-Banna established the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928. He viewed Western influences and values as subversive threats to the *ummah*'s moral fiber and traditions. Materialism, secularism, and mixed-sex interactions were not consistent with the teachings of the Koran.[24] Al-

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international opposition against the U.S. government and its allies. Sheikh Osama was affected by the jihadist [*sic*] wave, concluding that if he wanted to get rid of corrupt regimes in the Arab and Islamic world, including the Saudi regime, they would have to face America." According to al-Suri, at its base al-Qaeda is a combination of Wahhabism and Muslim Brotherhood. Thomas Hegghammer, "Abdallah Azzam, the Iman of Jihad," in *Al Qaeda in its Own Words,* 81-101.

[21] Madawi Al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 17. Abdou Filali-Ansary, "Muslim and Democracy," in *Journal of Democracy* 10, no. 3 (1999): 18-32. Of note, according to Fazlur Rahman, *shari'a* "is not strictly speaking a law, since much of it embodies moral and quasi-moral precepts not enforceable in any court ... certain part of it came to be enforced almost uniformly throughout the Muslim world ... [but] on closer examination [it] is a body of legal opinion or ... 'endless discussion on the duties of a Muslim' rather than a neatly formulated code or codes."

[22] Dore Gold, *Hatred's Kingdom* (Washington D.C.: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 2003), 21-22. Al-Rasheed, 14-23. Al-Wahhab was considered a radical zealot. One of his contemporaries wrote, "His practice was to declare a group of famous scholars of the past unbelievers ... [and to maintain that] the Muslim community has existed for almost six hundred years in a state of unbelief (*kufr*), and he said the same of whoever did not follow him." After being expelled from his homeland of Uyaynah for his harsh enforcement of his religious edicts, al-Wahhab found refuge and support from Muhammad ibn Saud, the emir of Dir'iyyah. In 1745, the two made a pack, which they strengthened through intermarriages – Ibn al-Wahhab's daughter (Al al-Sheikh) married Muhammad ibn Saud. Ibn Saud assumed the role of imam, and ibn al-Wahhab led religious matters. Both men committed to wage *jihad* against non-Muslims and aberrant Muslims. Their descendants would continue to honor their alliance and form the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

[23] Gold, 25.

[24] Frederick M. Denny, *An Introduction to Islam* 3d ed. (Upper Saddle River: NJ, Pearson Prentice Hall, 2006), 342. Filali-Ansary, 38-39. The etymology of the Arabic word for secularism ('*ilamani*) reflects the intrinsic nature of Islamists' opposition to secular or democratic concepts. Abdou Filali-Ansary traces the root of 'ilamani (modern term for secularism) to Jamal-Eddin Al-Afghani, a prominent nineteenth century Muslim thinker. Al-Afghani gained notoriety for his defense of Islam against European secularists. To characterize the European secularists in his writings, he used the term *dahriyin* to mean temporalists. The term, however, is of Koranic origin and used to refer to the seventh-century atheist opponents of the Prophet Mohammed. Though different Arabic words have been used to more accurately capture the meaning of secularism – *dahriyin* (atheist), *la dini* (nonreligious or areligious) and '*ilmani* (this-worldly) –

Banna renewed calls to return to Islam as "a perfect, total and all-encompassing system, regulating every part of the social, political, personal, and religious life of the believer."[25] The Koran and the *hadith* (sacred traditions) provide the blueprint to establish a fair and just society for the *ummah*; this reformation to the true path is possible only through *jihad*.[26] The Egyptian government assassinated al-Banna in 1949.[27]

Sayyid Qutb continued al-Banna's struggle. Qutb felt that the *ummah* was headed toward *jahiliyyah* (ignorance) and Muslim secular governments were apostates.[28] As in the Prophet Mohammed's time, to remedy the situation required a *tali'a* of true believers armed with the Koran and *hadith* to fight apostasy and return to *shariah*. In 1954, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser outlawed the Muslim Brotherhood, and arrested and sentenced Qutb to ten years in prison. While imprisoned, Qutb authored *Milestones,* which served as a guide to a just and authentic Islamic society. He wrote, "Since the objective of the message of Islam is a decisive declaration of man's freedom, not merely on the philosophical plane but also in the actual conditions of life, it must employ jihad."[29] Nasser considered *Milestones* and Qutb direct threats to his regime. In 1966, Qutb was executed and, like al-Banna, became a *shaheed* (martyr) for Islamic reformers and radicals.

Abdallah Azzam shared a common trait with al-Banna and Qutb in that he was a member of the Muslim Brotherhood. Unlike the other two, Azzam expanded the concept

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the original hostile connotation has proven resilient. Filali-Ansary wrote, "To be a secularist has meant to abandon Islam ... a total alienation from the constituent elements of the Islamic personality and as a complete surrender to unbelief, immorality, and self-hatred, leading to a disavowal of the historic identity and civilization inherited from illustrious ancestors."

[25] Burke, 48.

[26] Hasan al-Banna, "Jihad" in *The Cannons of Jihad: Terrorists' Strategy for Defeating America*, ed. by Jim Lacey (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2008), 5, 10; Raymond Ibrahim, *The Al Qaeda Reader* (New York: Broadway Books, 2007), xix; and Burke, 47-49. *Hadith* refers specifically to the traditions of the words and deeds of the Prophet Mohammed. The traditions supplement and provide context to the Koran. *Jihad* is incumbent on all Muslims without exception. Al-Banna wrote, "Every person should according to Islam prepare himself/herself for jihad..." He implored the *ummah*, "My brothers! ... Degradation and dishonor are the results of the love of this world and fear of death. Therefore prepare for jihad and be lovers of death."

[27] In 1948, a Muslim Brotherhood member assassinated Nuqrashi Pasha, the Egyptian Prime Minister. In retaliation, the government assassinated al-Banna.

[28] Al Shaheed Sayyid Qutb, "Milestones" in *The Canons of Jihad: Terrorists' Strategy for Defeating America*, ed. by Jim Lacey, (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2008), 14; Denny, 344-345. The pre-Islamic era is often referred to as *jahiliyyah* because it was a period of paganism, idolatry, and tribal conflicts.

[29] Qutb, 22-23.

of jihad from a local to an international focus.[30] Azzam preached that *jihad* is necessary to liberate Muslim territory, not simply to reform the *ummah* and remove oppressive domestic regimes. He wrote, "Unfortunately, when we think about Islam we think nationally. We fail to let our vision pass beyond geographic borders that have been drawn up for us by the *kafir* [*sic* (infidels)]."[31] *Jihad* is obligatory for all Muslims worldwide, and *jihad* should continue until all Muslim lands are liberated. *Jihad* is defensive.[32] *Mujahedeen* are needed to protect Muslim lands and resist foreign invasion. To do this, *mujahedeen* need a territory or *qaeda sulba* (a solid base) where they can gather, train, and learn to become a force or army prepared for battle. He rejected the idea of a small vanguard and preferred a standing reactionary force.[33] Azzam emphasized that the primary focus should be on the external enemy – Israel, America, and the West, and not internal regimes.[34] He glorified martyrdom and extolled its value in *jihad*. Azzam was assassinated in Pakistan in 1989.[35]

Bin Laden saw himself as a reformer and al-Qaeda as the vanguard to transform and to liberate the *ummah*. In 1988, his vision was to create a vanguard of *mujahedeen*

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[30] Azzam was a Palestinian religious scholar and graduate of the distinguished al-Azhar religious school in Egypt. He taught and lectured in Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. Bin Laden reportedly attended some of his lectures in Saudi Arabia. Azzam's membership to the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, of which he was part, was suspended around 1984 over a disagreement on the role of volunteers. Azzam wanted fighters to be sent to Afghanistan. The head of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood preferred volunteers to make financial and humanitarian assistance contributions. Azzam internationalized the Afghan War through his global lectures, recruiting, and fundraising for the Afghan cause. He wrote prolifically during the Afghan War to encourage Muslims to donate their time, money and lives to defeat the Soviet Union. He also became the Afghan Arab's ideologue. In 1984, he established the *Maktab al-Khadamat* (Service Bureau) organization, which served as a reception, information, training, and distribution center for Muslim volunteers coming to Pakistan to fight in the Afghan War. Azzam's office was located in Peshawar, Pakistan. Hegghammer, 92,101; and Burke, 72.

[31] Atwan, 74.

[32] Theoretically, only the head of the *ummah* (*imam*) or caliphate can call an offensive and defensive *jihad*. When asked to engage in a defensive *jihad*, it is the religious duty of all healthy male Muslims to answer the call. Muslims cannot buy their way out of the obligation. Only the caliph should order an offensive *jihad* outside of his border of control. The caliphate, however, ended in 1924 with the emergence of the state of Turkey and the abolishment of the caliphate. Debates persist on who has the authority to call for a *jihad*. Michael Bonner, *Jihad in Islamic History: Doctrines and Practice* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 12.

[33] Fawaz A. Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 136; and Hegghammer, 100.

[34] Gerges, *The Far Enemy*, 134-136.

[35] Bin Laden is suspected to have played a role in his assassination. He was among a long list of suspects. No individual or group has claimed responsibility for Azzam's killing. His homicide remains unsolved. Azzam was bin Laden's mentor during his time in Pakistan. The two worked closely together until 1988 when bin Laden established his organization to cater exclusively to the influx of Arab volunteers.

that would liberate Muslim lands from apostate regimes and foreign presence.[36] His nascent organization was one of many *jihadi* groups operating in Afghanistan. It consisted of about a dozen core members, mainly members of the Egyptian group, Islamic Jihad, which Ayman al-Zawahiri led, and a loose network of hundreds of associates experienced in Afghanistan and elsewhere in various fields of expertise such as money laundering and explosives handling. These associates shared bin Laden's interests and cooperated with the core members to accomplish objectives and missions. A tertiary group consisted of freelancers who pitched their ideas and competed for Bin Laden's sponsorship. This latter group also consists of members of the Muslim diaspora who sympathized with al-Qaeda's ideology.[37] Contrary to American public perception, bin Laden did not name his organization. It was simply known as a hub or base (*al qaeda* in Arabic) facilitating activities rather than a highly structured organization operationally controlling internationally dispersed cells. Bin Laden came to embrace and use the name "al-Qaeda" later, only after the US began to use the label.[38] American attention added to bin Laden's prestige and credibility and helped to elevate his stature among his peers. Consequently, al-Qaeda coffers increased along with bin Laden's notoriety. Bin Laden used his celebrity status to access media outlets to promote his cause and fluid ideology to attract recruits and to antagonize Western powers.[39]

In bin Laden's and al-Qaeda's worldview there is no greater role than that of a *jihadi,* for he is the protector of Islam and the *ummah*. The *jihadi* defends Muslim territory and restores the *ummah*'s manhood and pride. For his personal sacrifice, Allah will reward the *jihadi* in this life with the killing of infidels and in the next life with

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[36] Atwan, 77; Hegghammer, 99-100; Stephanie Lacroix, "Ayman al-Zawahiri, Veteran of Jihad," in *Al Qaeda in its Own Words*, 155.

[37] Burke, 13-14.

[38] Burke, 5, 14. According to Burke, there was no such thing as an al-Qaeda organization until the FBI used the label to facilitate building a criminal file against individuals associated with bin Laden. It was a convenient convention that treated al-Qaeda as if a monolithic organization, which it was not. Abdel Bari Atwan argued that the name "al Qaeda" was the name of the registry or database (*Qaedat al-Ma'lumat*) one of bin Laden's organizations used to record the names of *mujahedeen* coming into Pakistan to fight in the Afghan war. This 1986 registry was to keep track on those killed so that their families could be informed. Atwan, 44.

[39] I call this ideology fluid, because bin Laden was flexible in adopting whatever aspects of an ideology that best fitted his end goals for the moment. He also welcomed individuals into his group that did not necessarily have strong or solid ideological grounding. Saghi, 20.

sexual gratification.[40] Upon death, a *shaheed* goes to heaven where, "Fixed atop his head will be a crown of honor, a ruby that is greater than the world and all it contains. And he will couple with seventy-two *Aynhour* (virgins) and be able to offer intercessions for seventy of his relatives."[41]

In February 1998, bin Laden released the World Islamic Front's declaration imploring Muslims to join al-Qaeda's *jihad* against America and its allies.[42] The authors of the declaration wrote that "kill[ing] the Americans and their allies—civilians and military—is an individual obligation incumbent upon every Muslim who can do it and in any country."[43] Muslims should follow this call to action because America has occupied Muslim lands, plundered the *ummah*'s natural resources, supported illegitimate local leaders, and caused Muslim deaths directly in places like Iraq and Afghanistan and indirectly in places like Palestine.[44] America is the root cause of the Muslim world's local or domestic grievances. Muslims should defer temporarily their actions against inept local governments. Instead they should mobilize and direct their energy first at the "far enemy" for supporting puppet local governments and tyrants.[45] America was the lead Satan, so removing America would have a ripple effect and bring about the overthrow of

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[40] Tawfiq Hamid, "The Development of a Jihadi's Mind," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 5 (April 2007): 18, http://www.currenttrends.org/research/detail/the-development-of-a-jihadists-mind (*Chicago*,17.237)

[41] Ibrahim, *The Al Qaeda Reader,* 143-144. This is from a paper prepared under the supervision of Dr. Ayman Al-Zawahiri for the World Islamic Front for Jihad against Jews and Crusaders (World Islamic Front or International Islamic Front for short). The quote is from one of the Prophet Mohammed's *hadith* (report of his practices).

[42] James Turner Johnson, "Debates over Just War and Jihad: Ideas, Interpretations, and Implications across Cultures," in *Debating the War of Ideas*, eds. Eric D. Patterson and Johan Gallagher (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 91-95; Ibrahim, *The Al Qaeda Reader,* 137-140. Al-Qaeda's interpretation of the Koran to justify its version of *jihad* is replete with inconsistencies and distortions. For example, only the leader of the community can call for a *jihad* of the sword as advocated by bin Laden. *Jihad* is a collective and not an individual effort. Also, the Koran does not condone suicide attacks; yet, al-Qaeda has ruled that suicide operations are acceptable methods of warfare based on loose interpretations of the Koran and the doctrine of *taqiyya*, religious dissimulation or war of deceit, and the mujahedeen's intent to serve Allah and Islam. In other words, since mujahedeen fighters engage in suicide operations not because of personnel motivations such as depression, familial problems, but rather to serve in furthering Allah's message and spread of Islam, then their deaths are *halal* (allowed) by Allah and the Prophet.

[43] Raymond Ibrahim, *The Al Qaeda Reader*, 13.

[44] Daniel Byman, *The Five Front War: The Better Way to Fight Global Jihad* (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2008), 173-190.

[45] Gerges, *The Far Enemy*, 1.

puppet regimes throughout the Middle East and beyond. Bin Laden remarked, "If we cut off the head of America, the kingdoms in the Arab world will cease to exist."[46]

In al-Qaeda's interpretation any Muslims who cooperated with America are *kufrs* and therefore were legitimate targets for attack. Bin Laden cited the Koran and reminded Muslims: "O ye who believe! Take not the Jews and the Christians for your friends: They are but friends to each other: And he amongst you that turns to them (for friendship) is of them (an infidel)."[47] Reconciliation between Muslims and non-Muslims was unacceptable. Quoting the Koran, Bin Laden wrote the struggle between Muslims and non-Muslims will continue until "the infidel submits to the authority of Islam. … But if the hate at any time extinguishes from the heart, this is great apostasy! Battle, animosity, and hatred – directed from the Muslim to the infidel – is the foundation of our religion."[48] Infidel women and children are also fair targets because they do not enjoy protections afforded to *dhimmis* (protected non-believers) during *jihad*.[49] Additionally, he argued the Koran sanctions the killing and pointed to the verse that read: "Fight the pagans all together as they fight you all together."[50]

In August 1998, al-Qaeda affiliates responded to bin Laden's February *fatwa*. In a tactic that would become al-Qaeda's trademark, two nearly simultaneous suicide car and truck-bombs targeted American embassies in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and Nairobi, Kenya. The bombing resulted in the immediate death of 301 individuals. Another 5,000 people were injured, some critically.[51] A total of 12 Americans perished in the attacks. Hours later, the International Islamic Front issued a statement that read: "Oh Muslims, the Israeli cancer in Palestine and the American cancer in the land Hijaz (i.e., Saudi Arabia) must be uprooted. Islam obliges us to liberate all Muslim land from occupiers whoever they may be. … Jihad is the spearhead of its [*ummah*'s] ideology … and Allah has promised authority, victory and domination."[52] Bin Laden's vague notion of a warrior

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[46] Gerges, *The Far Enemy*, 13.
[47] Hamid, 13.
[48] Raymond Ibrahim, "Taqiyya: War and Deceit in Islam," in *Debating the War of Ideas*, eds. Eric D. Patterson and Johan Gallagher (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 77.
[49] Ibrahim, *The Al Qaeda Reader*, 140
[50] Ibrahim, *The Al Qaeda Reader*, 13.
[51] Hoffman, 87.
[52] Hoffman, 95.

vanguard, which began in the late 1980s and germinated in Afghanistan in 1996, had reached its maturation.

The new millennium started out well for bin Laden and al-Qaeda. On the personal front, he married his fifth wife, seventeen-year-old Amal al-Sadah from Yemen.[53] His *bayat* (pledge of allegiance) to Afghani Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar was proving fruitful.[54] Mullah Omar was obligated by religious and cultural norms to protect bin Laden as his guest, and he honored that obligation at extraordinary cost to his nation.[55] The Taliban remained steadfast allies, refusing American, Saudi, and Pakistani pressure for bin Laden's extradition.[56] Bin Laden survived several attempts against his life, including America's Operation Infinite Reach*,* which targeted his training centers and headquarters near Khost, Afghanistan, with eighty Tomahawk cruise missiles.[57] The president of the world's most powerful nation validated bin Laden's importance by calling him, "the preeminent organizer and financier of international terrorism in the world today."[58] His popularity throughout the Middle East and among Muslims soared. He was lionized in two biographies, and his face adorned t-shirts and posters sold throughout the region.[59] Financial support to bin Laden and the Taliban poured in, exceeding $63 million in 2000.[60] Bin Laden became a contemporary Middle Eastern

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[53] Atwan, 60.

[54] Burke, 186-187.

[55] Claudio Franco, "The Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan" in *Decoding the New Taliban: Insights from the Afghan Field*, ed. Antonio Giustozzi (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 272.

[56] Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos: The U.S. and the Disaster in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 24; Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 384-386, 400-402, 414-415; and Seth Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires: America's War in Afghanistan* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010), 83-84.

[57] Richard J. Newman, et al. "America fights back," *U.S. News & World Report* 125, no. 8 (31 August 1998).

[58] Bill Clinton: "Address to the Nation on Military Action Against Terrorist Sites in Afghanistan and Sudan," August 20, 1998. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *American Presidency Project,* http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=54799&st=terror&st1=#ixzz1pbNB71D8. (*Chicago*, 17.237)

[59] Philip Smucker, *My Brother, My Enemy: America and the Battle of Ideas across the Islamic World* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2010), 98-100; and Coll, 412.

[60] This is according to a Saudi audit, which estimated that bin Laden received at least $3 million and the Taliban $60 million from Saudi sources. Coll, 517.

version of Che Guevara with his defiance of America inspiring admiration throughout the region.[61]

Organizationally, al-Qaeda was at its zenith in 2000. The group had secure bases in Afghanistan to train its fighters and plan their operations. Their host, the Taliban, seemed poised to consolidate its power over most of Afghanistan. Aided by bin Laden's Brigade 55 foreign fighters, the Taliban seized Taloqan, the Northern Alliance's headquarters and site of the strongest remaining opposition to the Taliban's conquest in September 2000.[62] In October, al-Qaeda affiliates successfully attacked the U.S.S. *Cole,* an American Navy destroyer, in the Gulf of Aden, Yemen. America did not respond to the attack militarily, in part because terrorism was still viewed as a crime and therefore was a problem for federal law enforcement, diplomacy, and international law. Bin Laden celebrated his brothers' achievement of killing 17 American servicemen, and during his son's wedding, he referred to the incident in a taunting poem.[63] Bin Laden hoped for a massive American military retaliation to help awaken the sleeping *ummah*, but instead America chose to respond by imposing international sanctions against the Taliban.[64] Bin Laden welcomed this decision nonetheless, as it was consistent with his narrative of American cowardice. The sanctions also pushed the isolated Taliban closer to al-Qaeda for financial support. Al-Qaeda was emboldened, and with the launching of its first website, maalemaljihad.com, and the appearance of new Middle Eastern satellite television channels such as al Jazeera and al Arabiya, the group propagated its message and attracted new recruits.[65] On 9 September 2001, al-Qaeda extended another gift to the Taliban when two of its agents lured the Northern Alliance's leader, Ahmed Shah Massoud, to an interview and detonated a suicide vest, killing the "Lion of Panjshir" in the process.[66]

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[61] For discussion and perspective on how the cruise missile attack helped to make bin Laden into a hero, see Tim Weiner, "Missile Strikes Against bin Laden Won him Esteem in Muslim Lands, U.S. Officials Say," *New York Times*, 8 February 1999, http://www.nytimes.com/1999/02/08/world/missile-strikes-against-bin-laden-won-him-esteem-muslim-lands-us-officials-say.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm. (Chicago, 17.198)
[62] Coll, 536.
[63] Burke, 213.
[64] Rashid, 18-19; *9-11 Commission Report: Final Report on the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004), 191.
[65] Atwan, 127; Brigitte L. Nacos, *Mass-Mediated Terrorism: The Central Role of Media in Terrorism and Counterterrorism* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007), 63-64.
[66] Coll, 582; Rashid, 21-22.

Clinton's Fight with Al-Qaeda

Terrorists repeatedly challenged President Bill Clinton's Administration.[67] In total, he responded to no less than five major terrorist incidents, which resulted in 54 American fatalities and hundreds injured.[68] In 1993, Ramzi Yousef and his accomplices bombed the World Trade Center, killing six Americans. In 1996, al-Qaeda affiliates attacked the American base in Khobar, Saudi Arabia, killing 19 American servicemen. In 1998, al-Qaeda-affiliated individuals bombed American embassies in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania and Nairobi, Kenya, killing a total of 12 Americans. Lastly, in 2000, the U.S.S. *Cole* bombing killed 17.

Faced with this onslaught of terrorist attacks, the Clinton Administration struggled to understand the threat and to respond accordingly. Shortly after bin Laden relocated from Sudan to Afghanistan in 1996, analysts at the Department of State sent a classified report that concluded: "[bin Laden's] prolonged stay in Afghanistan – where hundreds of 'Arab mujahidin' receive terrorist training and key extremist leaders often congregate – could prove more dangerous [than bin Laden's activities in Sudan] to US interests in the long run."[69] During President Clinton's first term, he judged bin Laden and al-Qaeda as a manageable nuisance that was a byproduct of the increasingly interdependent world.[70] After the 1998 embassy bombings, the president changed his opinion. He wrote, "I had known for some time that he [bin Laden] was a formidable adversary. After the African slaughter I became intently focused on capturing or killing him and with destroying al Qaeda [*sic*]."[71] Whether the perpetrators were members of a cohesive group (al-Qaeda) or independent operators was unclear. Many questions

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[67] Clinton also dealt with non-al-Qaeda domestic terrorist threats. In 1995, Timothy McVeigh bombed the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, killing 168 Americans. In 1996, Eric Rudolph planted a pipe bomb at the Centennial Olympic Park in Atlanta, Georgia during the Summer Olympic Games, killing two individuals.

[68] This is not an exhaustive list. For instance, the Clinton Administration considered the 1993 attempted assassination of former President George Bush Senior an act of terrorism, but this incident is not included. Attempted and foiled terrorist plots, such as the thwart terrorist plot against the American Embassy in Tirana, Albania is also not included.

[69] "Terrorism/Usama bin Ladin: Who's Chasing Whom?" *Judicial Watch*, 18 July 1996, http://www.judicialwatch.org/press-room/weekly-updates/34-new-information-clinton-administration-osama-bin-laden/. (*Chicago*, 17.237) *Judicial Watch* is a conservative organization that acquires government documents and has them declassified and made publically available through the Freedom of Information Act.

[70] *Time* interview of Bill Clinton, "His Side of the Story" *Time* 163, no. 26 (28 June 2004); Coll, 433.

[71] Bill Clinton, *My Life* (New York: Random House, Inc., 2004), 798.

puzzled the administration. The administration debated where terrorism fell. Was it a law-enforcement or a national security issue?[72] President Clinton concluded, "This will be a long, ongoing struggle … between the rule of law and terrorism."[73] Also, one thing was certain to those in the administration. In this struggle against a global, elusive threat, America would need allies.

Yet, the administration's key allies in the struggle against al-Qaeda were unreliable. Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates were valuable regional allies, but substantial segments of their populations were sympathetic to bin Laden and his cause. An additional consideration for Pakistani leaders is that Afghanistan provided them the strategic depth they need in the event of a war with India.[74] As such, Pakistan requires a friendly and pliant Afghan government. Pakistan had long nurtured its relationship with the Taliban in keeping with its strategic interests. The American policy was in direct conflict with Pakistani strategic requirements and practices. As for Saudi Arabia, due to domestic considerations and its prestige in the Muslim community, its leaders had to tacitly support or allow support for bin Laden's cause. Most of this support came in the form of financial contributions. London's King College Professor of Anthropology and Religion, Madawi Al-Rasheed, cautioned, "The symbolic significance of Saudi Arabia for Islam and Muslims cannot be overestimated. It has become a prerogative [*sic*] for its people and state to preserve its Islamic heritage."[75] Consequently, the "custodian of the two holy cities [Mecca and Medina]" had difficulty justifying its opposition to one of its favored sons as he avenged Muslims against a perceived bully.[76]

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[72] Lawrence F. Kaplan, "What We've Done Wrong. The Day Before," *The New Republic*, 24 September 2001, 22-23.

[73] "U.S. Fury on 2 Continents; Clinton's Words: 'There Will Be No Sanctuary for Terrorists,' *The New York Times*, 21 August 1998, http://www.nytimes.com/1998/08/21/world/us-fury-2-continents-clinton-s-words-there-will-be-no-sanctuary-for-terrorists.html. (*Chicago*, 17.198)

[74] Benazir Bhutto, *Reconciliation: Islam, Democracy, and the West* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2008), 194. The Pakistani government has historically used Islamists to further its strategic interests. It supported Islamist opposition groups in the 1970s to undermine hostile Afghan governments and to achieve strategic depth in the event of a war with India. And in the 1980s, Pakistan assisted America and Saudi Arabia to train, equip and organize Islamists to fight against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan.

[75] Madawi Al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 5.

[76] Burke, 57, 60; Dore Gold, *Hatred's Kingdom* (Washington D.C.: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 2003), 235. The Saudi state was founded as a theocracy by the political marriage of Abd al-Aziz ibn al-Rahman ibn Faisal al Saud (political) and Abdullah bin Abdul Latif, a Wahhabist adherent (religious). It was established with the goal of expelling foreign influence from Islam's most sacred place. As protector of Islam's two holiest cities, Saudi Arabia is sensitive to charges that it is negligent in its duties. In 1971, the Saudi King provided $100 million to al-Azhar University in Cairo to launch a campaign in the Muslim world against

Lastly, these partners were the only countries to recognize the Taliban and they served as communication channels for America. During this time America had no formal policy on Afghanistan, much less diplomatic relations with or embassy presence in the country. Given these realities, as well as evidence of significant Taliban human rights crimes and abuses, America did not recognize the group's claim to national power. Addressing the al-Qaeda and Taliban puzzle was a complex and frustrating undertaking for Clinton and his allies. Clinton also greatly feared terrorist attempts to acquire and use nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons. As the administration sorted through this cornucopia of issues, the president took several overt and covert measures in response.

Overtly, the president followed a three-pronged approach involving legal, diplomatic, and military measures to respond to the attacks. Clinton promoted several laws and measures to strengthen the Justice Department's and the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) ability to bring terrorists to justice.[77] He designated the FBI as "the lead agency in terrorism cases where Americans were victims."[78] On the diplomatic front, America led campaigns to impose economic sanctions on bin Laden, al-Qaeda, and the Taliban. The president began his campaign by formally denounced al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Executive Order 13129.[79] Thereafter, he sought international consensus and cooperation primarily in the form of United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs). UNSCR 1267, passed in October 1999, called for the Taliban to extradite bin

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kufr (infidels). In 1985, more than $250 million was extended to Afghanistan *mujahedeen* in their struggle against Soviet forces. In addition, thousands of mosques have been funded and missionaries trained to engage in Wahhabi motivated *jihad* abroad. In 2001, a religious leader from Mecca preached "Jihad – whether speaking about the defensive jihad of Muslim lands and Islam ... [or] jihad whose purpose is the spread of religion – is the pinnacle of terror as far as the enemies of Allah are concerned."

[77] For more detail on the Clinton Administration's measures see *9-11 Commission Report: Final Report on the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004). Ed Badolato, "How to Combat Terrorism," *World &I* 6, no. 8 (August 2001): 50-54; "Statement of Timothy E. Wirth, State Department Counselor, before the Subcommittee on International Security, International Organizations and Human Rights of the House Foreign Affairs Committee," *U.S. Department of State Dispatch* 4, no. 29 (19 July 1993); Jonathan Landay, "Launching a 'Homeland' Defense," *Christian Monitor* 91, no. 44; and Richard J. Barnet, "The Terrorism Trap," *The Nation*, 2 December 1996, 18-21.

[78] Coll, 254.

[79] The president issued this order in July 1999. In it, he declared that the Taliban's support to al-Qaeda represented a grave threat to America's national security interests. In order words, the Taliban was forewarned that America deemed that it, like al-Qaeda, is an enemy susceptible to military targeting. Jones, 83.

Laden and to cease its support of terrorists.[80] UNSCR 1333, passed in December 2000, placed a complete weapons ban on the Taliban and mandated seizing its foreign assets. UNSCR 1363, passed in July 2001, authorized the deployment of UN monitors to enforce the embargo along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.[81] In the realm of overt military responses, a 1998 cruise-missile, retaliation attack against al-Qaeda's training camps in Khost, Afghanistan, was ineffectual and punctuated what critics perceived to be a weak or non-existent counterterrorism strategy.[82] The attacks failed to deter al-Qaeda or compel the Taliban's compliance. On the contrary, they motivated al-Qaeda and galvanized their support base.[83] Clinton's search for more military options, such as using Special Forces (SOF), proved futile, as the Pentagon stonewalled his efforts.[84] The Clinton Administration feared a repeat of the outcome of the raid in Mogadishu in 1993, immortalized in the movie "Blackhawk Down," and lacked confidence in the abilities of SOF.[85]

Covertly, President Clinton authorized the CIA to capture or kill bin Laden. Clinton designated the CIA as the lead for terrorist activities outside of the country. The CIA's "bin Laden Issue Station" or "Alec" of the Counterterrorist Center began its operation in 1996 and led the covert effort.[86] In Afghanistan, the CIA used and trained an Afghan tracking teams to capture or kill bin Laden.[87] Clinton made clear his preference to capture bin Laden, but did not rule out killing him if necessary. If captured he authorized

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[80] The Taliban was not Sudan. It still struggled to consolidate its authority and had limited cash flow. It had more to lose by giving up bin Laden than Sudan did. Bin Laden served as the Taliban's lifeline for financial support and equipment.

[81] Rashid, 18.

[82] Byron York, "Clinton Has No Clothes," *National Review* 53, no. 24 (17 December 2001): 34-38; David K. Landrith, "Carter, Clinton Left Behind a Legacy of Terror for Americans," *Insight on the News* 18, no. 28 (5 August 2002); and Lawrence, 23.

[83] Weiner. Coll, 412; Burke, 181-183.

[84] Richard Clarke, *Against All Enemies: Inside America's War on Terror* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 140, 224; and Clinton, *My Life*, 925.

[85] Richard H. Shultz, Jr., "Showstoppers: Nine Reasons Why We Never Sent Our Special Forces After al Qaeda Before 9/11," *The Weekly Standard*, 26 January 2004, 28-29. In October 1993, a SOF raid to capture key members of Mohammed Aidid's organization, which had attacked and killed Pakistani peacekeepers, ended in 18 dead Americans. Somali rebels shot down two American Blackhawk helicopters and dragged the body of a killed American soldier throughout the streets of Mogadishu as Somali crowds cheered and celebrated which was duly captured in images that shocked the American public. The raid was a disaster for the Clinton Administration politically. For more information on Mogadishu and its impact on military intervention operations, see Cori Dauber, "Image as Argument: The Impact of Mogadishu on U.S. Military Intervention," *Armed Forces & Society* 27, no. 2 (Winter 2001): 205-229.

[86] Coll, 318-319.

[87] Faftali, 261; Coll, 375-375.

the use of "extraordinary rendition," which allowed suspected terrorists to be transferred between countries without formal trials.[88] The CIA made several plans to capture or kill bin Laden but was unable to secure presidential authorization, in the form of a classified finding, to carry them out. Those in the White House found themselves hamstrung by a number of external and internal elements. Externally, the Clinton White House faced a range of strategic political and diplomatic considerations associated with the end of the Cold War. In addition, senior members of the administration had a severe aversion to risk, particularly if those risks involved killing civilians.[89]

Bill Clinton invested considerable energy and resources to defeat al-Qaeda and bin Laden, but as his presidency ended his options narrowed. In three years, he increased the US counterterrorism budget by 40 percent, to total more than nine billion dollars by 2000.[90] He also increased funding for the CIA, FBI, and the Department of Justice, which allowed them to grow, in addition to improving intelligence-collection capabilities.[91] Nevertheless, the intense public criticisms that followed the failure of Operation Infinite Reach restricted Clinton's options in response to the U.S.S. *Cole* bombing. The failure increased doubts, as well as unwelcome scrutiny, regarding intelligence information about bin Laden's whereabouts. Those in the Pentagon, as well as key national-security principal executives, were reluctant to support military actions against al-Qaeda until the investigation confirmed the group's complicity.[92] Ironclad confirmation, however, was unlikely given that the intelligence came from Yemeni secondary reporting. The Yemeni authorities were not fully cooperative and would not permit the FBI to interview suspects.

Other factors also coalesced to dissuade President Clinton from launching another cruise missile attack following the bombing. Clinton was politically vulnerable and had less than three months left in office. The Monica Lewinski sex scandal and his impeachment trial remained fresh in the public's mind. He was accused in public fora of

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[88] In June 1995, the "U.S. Policy on Counterterrorism" or Presidential Decision Directive-39 (PDD-39) came into effect. The formerly classified document focused on terrorists and their possible links and interests in weapons of mass destruction. PDD-39 shifted the centralization of the counterterrorism effort from the CIA to the White House under the counterterrorism czar Richard Clark. Coll, 318-319, 272. A redacted version of the text of PDD-39 is available online at http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/pdd39.htm. (Chicago, 17.237)

[89] Clarke, 200; Coll 395, 446-452.

[90] Clinton, 907.

[91] Badolato, 50-54.

[92] Badolato, 50-54.

using the 1998 attacks as a distraction to divert attention away from his personal affairs. Even worse, his credibility was in question. Additionally, launching an attack in 2000 would undermine his Middle East Peace Initiative efforts and perhaps inflame the ongoing Palestinian *intifada* (uprising). Clinton wanted to avoid the perception that America was at war with the Muslim world in keeping with al-Qaeda's narrative. Also, Pakistani security and intelligence cooperation was improving. The Secretary of Defense feared that an attack would undermine this cooperation. The Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense voiced opposition to a retaliatory attack. The Pentagon argued against the use of SOF to destroy al-Qaeda, arguing that the risks were too great and actionable intelligence too scarce. In the end, America's response to the U.S.S. *Cole* bombing was flaccid.[93]

Conclusion

As America prepared to transition to its 43rd president, al-Qaeda was emboldened by its successes. US economic sanctions, political pressure, and military strikes had had minimal effect on bin Laden's and al-Qaeda's activities. In fact, America's reaction reinforced al-Qaeda's narrative. Al-Qaeda needed America to remain engaged in their duel to enable bin Laden to awaken the *ummah* from its stupor. During a CNN interview in 1997, reporters asked bin Laden if he had a message for President Clinton. He responded, "The hearts of Muslims are filled with hatred towards the United States of America and the American president. … The President has a heart that knows no words [because he allows Muslim women and children to suffer]. … Our people in the Arabian Peninsula will sen[d] him messages with no words because he does not know any words [understand]."[94]

President Clinton and his staff worked aggressively to ensure they had an appropriate understanding of al-Qaeda. They worked overtly, but primarily covertly, to thwart attacks and shore up America's defenses. They tried to forge an international coalition to address the problem. In spite of their efforts, they did not catch or kill bin

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[93] Faftali, 279-281. Also see, Michael Tomasky, "The Savaging of the President: His Terrible, Swift Sword Raines on Clinton," *Nation* 268, no. 1 (4 January 1999): 11-17; Stephen Budiansky, "Days in Crisis," *U.S. News & World Report* 125, no. 8 (31 August 1998); and Shultz, 25-33.

[94] "Transcript of Osama bin Laden Interview by Peter Arnett," *Information Clearing House*, March 1997, http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article7204.htm. (*Chicago*, 17.237)

Laden. In his memoir, Clinton said that, "My biggest disappointment was not getting bin Laden."[95]

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[95] Clinton, *My Life*, 935.

Chapter 3

Bush: Post 9/11 and War on Terror

Less than eight months in office, as President George W. Bush sat listening to a class of second-graders perform their reading drills, his aide whispered in his ear, "America is under attack."[1] At 8:48 a.m. a Boeing 767 aircraft crashed into the North Tower of New York's World Trade Center. At 9:06 a.m. another plane hit the South Tower. At 9:40 a.m. a Boeing 757 aircraft attacked the Pentagon and yet another crashed near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.[2] In eighty-two minutes, thousands were dead.[3] The nation was initially stunned, and then grief-stricken. The president ordered the American flag flown at half-staff over all public and government buildings in the United States as well as embassies and facilities abroad.[4] Bush reassured the American people that America would seek and obtain justice. Terrorists would soon learn that "those who make war against the United States have chosen their own destruction."[5]

As the towers fell, al-Qaeda and its sympathizers were elated. "*Mabruk*" (congratulations) could be heard in Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.[6] A Yemeni said, "What we all see in Osama bin Laden is the man who was able to take our revenge …. Through him divine justice was achieved."[7] It was a proud day for bin Laden. A month later, as America began to bomb Afghanistan, bin Laden remained confident and defiant. He explained: "This battle is not between al-

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[1] George W. Bush, *Decision Points* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2010), 126.

[2] Brigitte L. Nacos, *Mass-Mediated Terrorism: The Central Role of the Media in Terrorism and Counterterrorism* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007), 41.

[3] Nacos, 41.

[4] George W. Bush, "Proclamation 7461—Honoring the Victims of the Incidents on Tuesday, September 11, 2001," *The American Presidency Project*, 11 September 2001, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=61758#axzz1qhledKG9. (*Chicago*, 17.237)

[5] George W. Bush, "The President's Radio Address," *The American Presidency Project*, 15 September 2001, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=25001#axzz1qhledKG9. (*Chicago*, 17.237)

[6] Ralph D. Berenger, "Impact of 9/11 on the Middle East: Personal Reflections," in *How the World's News Media Reacted to 9/11: Essays from Around the Globe*, edited by Tomasz Pludowski (Spokane, WA: Marquette Books LLC, 2007), 227; and Fawaz A. Gerges, *Journey of the Jihadist: Inside Muslim Militancy* (New York: Harcourt Book, 2007), 209.

[7] Abdel Bari Atwan, *The Secret History of al Qaeda* (Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 2006), 86.

Qaeda and the U.S. This is a battle of Muslims against the global Crusaders."[8] In this battle, he said, America would lose, for there could be no peace until Muslim lands were liberated.[9]

This chapter explores America's fight against al-Qaeda from 2001 to 2008.[10] The chapter is divided into three parts. The first establishes the international and national context. The second reviews the public discourse, public opinion, and government policies in the United States and investigates if instances of groupthink, social identity, and cognitive closure existed and how these impediments influenced American understanding and behavior. The last looks at how American actions affected al-Qaeda.

International Context

In part, bin Laden's narrative of a clash between the West and Muslims resonated with a segment of the Muslim world because he tapped into a long-standing and on-going debate within the *ummah* (Muslim community).[11] The crux of the debate was Islam's role in politics. The two opposing camps were the secularists who sought to maintain separation between the state and religion and who tended to favor the West, and the political Islamists, who saw politics and religion as intertwined and inseparable and who viewed the West as hostile to Muslim interests. The debate played out in the politics of Turkey, Iran, and Palestine, where political Islamists made headway against secularists. In Turkey, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan led the rise of the conservative and pro-Islamist Justice and Development Party (AKP) in 2002.[12] In Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad brought an end to US-Iranian rapprochement and the liberal reforms of

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[8] Quoted in Raymond Ibrahim, ed., *The Al Qaeda Reader* (New York: Broadway Books, 2007), 262-263.

[9] Peter L. Bergen, *Holy War, Inc.: Inside the Secret World of Osama bin Laden* (New York: The Free Press, 2001), 221.

[10] Of note, this chapter will not cover the American led Iraq War in great detail, but only in passing as the focus of this project is on American counterterrorism efforts against al-Qaeda and not all of President Bush's policies.

[11] Patrick M. Cronin,. ed., *Global Strategic Assessment 2009, America's Security Role in a Changing World* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 2009), 121.

[12] Zeyno Baran, *Torn Country: Turkey Between Secularism & Islamism* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2010), 45-51. "Turkey's New Prime Minister," *The Economist*, 13 March 2003, http://www.economist.com/node/1633574. (*Chicago*, 17.187) Erdogan tried and failed to secure enough parliamentary votes to authorize American use of Turkish territory to launch an assault into Northern Iraq in 2003. James E. Kapsis, "The Failure of U.S.-Turkish Pre-war Negotiations: An Overconfident United States, Political Mismanagement and a Conflicted Military," *The Middle East Review of International Affairs* 10, no. 3 (September 2006). http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2006/issue3/jv10no3a3.html. (*Chicago*, 17.181)

Sayyid Mohammad Khatami. He assumed the mantel of the Iranian presidency in 2005.[13] In January 2006, the Islamist group Hamas, which America designated a terrorist organization, won the Palestinian parliamentary elections.[14]

Bin Laden and his associates extended the politics to the street through violence. Unlike politics, however, bin Laden and his associates were not interested in providing voters choices. Secularist or pro-Western Muslim states were to be punished for supporting the West and America specifically. On 12 May 2003, suicide car bombs targeted Western residential areas in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, killing 34 and injuring 200; among the fatalities were seven Americans.[15] On 9 November 2005, suicide bombers with links to Abu Musab Zarqawi, an al-Qaeda associate, targeted three Western hotel chains in Amman, Jordan, killing 57 and wounding 110.[16] On 26 November 2008, Lashkar-e-Taiba, an al-Qaeda affiliated group, attacked several popular locales in Mumbai with explosives and firearms. They held the city hostage for 62 hours and left about 175 dead and hundreds injured.[17] A total of 26 foreigners, including six Americans, were among the dead.[18]

Bin Laden intended to also punish Western states for their support of America and its hostile policies against the *ummah*. For bin Laden and his sympathizers, America's invasion of Iraq on 19 March 2003 served as a clarion call for action and a testament to

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[13] Jon Lee Anderson, "After the Crackdown: Talking to Mahmoud Ahmadinejad – and the opposition – about Iran today," *The New Yorker*, 16 August 2010, http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2010/08/16/100816fa_fact_anderson?currentPage=all. (*Chicago*, 17.181)

[14] Scott Wilson, "Hamas Sweeps Palestinian Elections, Complicating Peace Efforts in Mideast," *Washington Post*, 27 January 2006, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/01/26/AR2006012600372.html. (*Chicago*, 17.198)

[15] Bruce Riedel and Bilal Y. Saab, "Al Qaeda's Third Front: Saudi Arabia," *Washington Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (Spring 2008): 36.

[16] Hassan M. Fattah and Michael Slackman, "3 Hotels Bombed in Jordan; At Least 57 Die," *New York Times*, 10 November 2005, http://www.nytimes.com/2005/11/10/international/middleeast/10jordan.html. (*Chicago*, 17.198); and Lionel Beehner, "The Effects of the Amman Bombings on U.S. Jordanian Relations," *Council on Foreign Relations*, 10 November 2005, http://www.cfr.org/jordan/effects-amman-bombings-us-jordanian-relations/p9200. (*Chicago*, 17.181)

[17] Bob Woodward, *Obama's Wars* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 2010), 44-47.

[18] K. Alan Krosnstadt, "Terrorist Attacks in Mumbai, India and Implications for U.S. Interests," *Congressional Research Service*, 19 December 2008, http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/terror/R40087.pdf. (*Chicago*, 17.237) This list does not include all terrorist activities that occurred during the period under review. There were terrorist attacks prior to the American led invasion of Iraq. For instance the attack on the Indian parliament in December 2001, which resulted in the death of 9 individuals and Pakistani and Indian military build-up and a 10-month military standoff between the rivals. For more details see Krosnstadt, "Terrorist Attacks in Mumbai." Also absent from the list are the Bali attacks in 2002 and 2005 and the Chechen attacks in 2004. These attacks are omitted due to the limited scope of this project.

America's enmity toward Muslims. Bin Laden encouraged associates and sympathizers to attack Western powers in defense of Muslims. An al-Qaeda-inspired attack in Madrid, Spain, on 11 March 2004, just before general elections, killed 191 and wounded close to 1,800 rail commuters.[19] The perpetrators claimed the attacks were in retaliation for Spain's participation in the US-led offensive in Iraq. Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar was voted out of office and Spain withdrew its forces from the coalition in Iraq.[20] On 7 July 2005, four British Muslim suicide bombers attacked the London Underground, killing 52 individuals and injuring more than 200.[21] A friend of one of the London suicide bombers explained, "He was sick of it all, all the injustice and the way the world is going about it. Why, for example, don't they ever take a moment of silence for all the Iraqi kids who die?"[22]

The violence from terrorist attacks and American operations in Iraq and Afghanistan helped polarize the world into diametrically opposed camps. On 30 September 2005, a Danish newspaper, Jyllands-Posten, published a series of cartoons depicting the Prophet Mohammed. One of the depictions was of the Prophet as a terrorist. The publication sparked protests and violence in the Middle East, Asia, Africa and Europe. Danish embassies were attacked in Lebanon, Syria, Iran, and Pakistan.[23] An estimated 200 people died in the ensuing violence over a cartoon.[24]

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[19] Paul Hamilos, "The Worst Islamist Attack in European History," *The Guardian*, 31 October 2007, http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/oct/31/spain. (*Chicago*, 17.198)

[20] According to Scott Atran, there is no conclusive evidence that the group who committed the attacks had any links to al-Qaeda. The main plotter, Jamal Ahmidan (Chinaman), was inspired by Abu Musab Zarqawi, head of al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia. Also, Atran argued that Prime Minister Aznar lost his post because he tried to exploit the bombings for political advantage. Aznar continued to blame Spain's traditional terrorist ETA even as the evidence indicated otherwise. There was little public support for Spain's involvement in the war in Iraq prior to the bombing, and the incident pushed Spain to conform to popular opinion. The Madrid bombing is second only to the 9/11 attack in the number killed and injured as well as overall destruction. Scott Atran, *Talking to the Enemy: Faith Brotherhood, and the (Un)making of Terrorists* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2010), 168-210.

[21] Louise Richardson, *What terrorist Want: Understanding the Enemy, Containing the Threat* (New York: Random House, 2006), 78; "London rocked by terror attacks," *BBC.com*, 7 July 2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/4659093.stm. (*Chicago,* 17.198)

[22] Gerges, *Journey of the Jihadist*, 266.

[23] "Muslim Cartoon Row Timeline," *BBC.com*, 19 February 2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4688602.stm. (*Chicago*, 17.198)

[24] "Danish Cartoon Controversy," *New York Times*, 12 August 2009, http://topics.nytimes.com/topics/reference/timestopics/subjects/d/danish_cartoon_controversy/index.html. (*Chicago*, 17.198) Some Muslims argue that the issue was greater than a cartoon and has to deal with Westerners' lack of respect of Muslims and Islam.

National Context

Al-Qaeda's audacious attacks shocked America and left it economically and socially insecure. The attacks represented the first assault on American soil since the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on 7 December 1941. 9/11 not only resulted in loss of life, but also threatened to weaken the American economy. The stock market closed for four days, the first non-scheduled closure since President Franklin Roosevelt declared a five-day bank holiday during the 1933 Great Depression.[25] The Consumer Confidence Index plunged to 85.5 in October compared to 135.8 the previous year.[26] Over 625,000 people lost their jobs due to the resultant uncertainty and the downward economic spiral.[27] The New York City Comptroller estimated that al-Qaeda's attacks robbed the city of approximately $82.8 to $94.8 billion in wealth and capital revenue in the first four years after the event.[28]

America's financial insecurity was matched by its hypersensitivity to the threat of terrorism. At least 23 terror alerts between 2001 and 2004 reminded Americans that terrorism remained a real concern.[29] Anthrax-laced letters a week after the terrorist attacks and sniper-shootings in the District of Columbia in 2002 kept the country on edge.[30] Some Americans developed phobias of "people in Muslim garb on airplanes."[31] A group called Operation Save America warned: "Islam is the enemy God has allowed to be raised up to bring His warning to America. Bloodshed is pursuing us."[32]

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[25] David Zeiler, "New York Stock Exchange Holiday Calendar 2011-2013," *Money Morning*, 21 November 2011, http://moneymorning.com/2011/11/21/new-york-stock-exchange-holiday-calendar-2011-2013/. (Chicago, 17.198) For more information on the financial impact New York City, see William C. Thompson, Jr., "One Year Later: The Fiscal Impact of 9/11 on New York City," 4 September 2002, http://comptroller.nyc.gov/bureaus/bud/reports/impact-9-11-year-later.pdf. (Chicago, 17.237)

[26] John M. Virgo, "Economic Impact of the Terrorist Attacks of September 11, 2001," *Atlantic Economic Journal* 29, no. 4 (Dec 2001): 354.

[27] Virgo, 355.

[28] Thompson, "One Year Later."

[29] John Mueller, *Overblown* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 40.

[30] Anna Quindlen, "Young in a Year of Fear," *Newsweek* 140, no. 19 (4 November 2002).

[31] Juan Williams, *Muzzled: The Assault on Honest Debate* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2011), 93.

[32] "9-11-Will We Connect the Dots?" *Operation Save America*, October 2002, http://www.operationsaveamerica.org/news/news/2002-10.htm.html#Islam. (Chicago, 17.181) According to the Anti-Defamation League, Operation Save America has been harassing Muslim Americans since 2001. See, "Backgrounder: Operation Save America," *ADL,* 25 March 2011, http://www.adl.org/main_Extremism/operation_save_america.htm. (*Chicago*, 17.237)

The government tried to urge calm and to avoid ostracizing its Muslim citizens and residents. It preached that Islam is a religion of peace.[33] In spite of the effort, American Muslims were attacked as a degree of Islamophobia spread, brought on largely by a level of social and individual ignorance of the religion and its tenets within the U.S. From September to December 2001, the Federal Bureau of Investigation received 481 reports of hate crimes against American Muslims.[34] Approximately 12 to 19 American Muslims were killed in retaliation for the World Trade Center attack.[35] The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) reported that 1,972 Muslim Americans complained of civil rights violations in 2005; this represented a 29.6 percent increase from the previous year and a new record high in CAIR's twelve-year history.[36] In 2008, that record was shattered as the number of complaints reached 2,728.[37] The increasing suspicion and animosity caused some Muslim Americans to turn inward and cling to their Muslim communities and identity.[38] In a 2007 Pew Research Center polling of 1,050 American Muslims, 53 percent claimed that being Muslim in America became harder after the 11-September attacks.[39]

American Muslim's sentiments and experiences reflect what was happening more broadly in America. That is, America's insecurities made the population, and its leaders, overly defensive and aggressive. Following the attack, Congress unanimously passed a joint resolution authorizing the president to use force against those responsible for the 11-

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[33] Bush, 141; Lori Peek, *Behind the Backlash: Muslim Americans after 9/11* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2011), 23-28.

[34] Peek, 28.

[35] Peek, 28.

[36] "Islamophobia," *Council on American-Islamic Relations*, http://www.cair.com/Issues/Islamophobia/Islamophobia.aspx. (Chicago, 17.237) CAIR is a controversial human rights group. According to Zeyno Baran who works at the Hudson Institute, a Washington D.C. think tank, CAIR is part of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and has links to Hamas. She claimed that several CAIR officers and employees have been indicted on terrorism-related charges. For more read, Zeyno Baran, "The Muslim Brotherhood's US Network," in *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology, Volume 6,* edited by Hillel Fradkin, Husain Haqqani, and Eric Brown, (Washington D.C.: Hudson Institute, 2008) 27 February 2008, 112-114. The article is also available from http://www.hudson.org/files/documents/CT6%20zeyno.pdf. (*Chicago*, 17.237)

[37] Peek, 33.

[38] Saminaz Zaman, "Form Iman to Cyber-Mufti: Consuming Identity in Muslim America," *Muslim World* 98, no. 4 (Oct 2008): 465-474.

[39] "Muslim American: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream," *Pew Research Center*, 22 May 2007, 35, http://pewsocialtrends.org/files/2010/10/muslim-americans.pdf. (*Chicago*, 17.237)

September attacks.[40] On 7 October 2001, America launched Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan to destroy the Taliban, al-Qaeda, and bin Laden. As American military forces continued to fight al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, American leaders shifted their attention to Iraq. Several senior members of the Bush administration, including Vice President Richard Cheney and Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, argued that America should attack Iraq to pre-empt future Iraqi attacks on America and its interests. In their minds, Iraq and al-Qaeda were natural allies given their hatred of America. Also, if Iraq had and was pursuing weapons of mass destruction, it could easily provide them to al-Qaeda.[41] In spite of a lack of evidence to support these theories, the administration drafted and forwarded to Congress a joint resolution to authorize the use of force against Iraq. Congress acquiesced and over 70 percent voted in support of the authorization for war.[42]

Public Discourse

The international and national context served as a backdrop and accented the evolving American public discourse. More specifically, the context amplified an American preoccupation with terrorism that predated 2001. CBS News' coverage of terrorism went from 336 news segments in 2000 to 2,674 news segments in 2004. National Public Radio (NPR), which had one of the sparest records of news segments on terrorism, increased from 67 stories in 2000 to 2,720 in 2004. The *New York Times* experienced the biggest uptick, going from 889 segments in 2000 to 9,798 stories in 2004.[43] Reports on bin Laden equaled or exceeded those on Bush in the months following

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[40] Keesha M. Middlemass and Christian R. Grose, "The Three Presidencies? Legislative Position Taking in Support of the President on Domestic, Foreign, and Homeland Security Policies in the 107th Congress (2001-02)," *Congress & the Presidency* 34, no. 2 (Autumn 2007): 64-66. This resolution was passed on 18 September 2001. The vote was 98 to zero in the Senate, and 420 to one in the House of Representatives. Jennifer K. Elsea and Richard E. Grimmett, "Declaration of War and Authorization for the Use of Military Force: Historical Background and Legal Implications," *Congressional Research Service*, RL31133, 17 March 2011, 14-16, http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL31133.pdf. (*Chicago*, 17.237)

[41] This thesis addresses the argument that a link between Iraq and al-Qaeda existed. It does not address the history or claim that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. America and its allies have not found Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

[42] Elsea and Grimmett, 17. The vote for the resolution was 296 to 133 in the House and 77 to 23 in the Senate.

[43] Nacos, 94.

the September 2001 attacks. From October to November 2001, CBS News had 201 news segments mentioning Bush, and 434 mentioning bin Laden.[44]

More coverage, however, did not equate to a rich exchange of ideas or perspectives to frame the terrorist threat. The public discourse became more of a conduit of the government's narrative rather than a place where ideas clashed, competed, and synthesized in a refined blend of understanding. Major networks employed pre-screening measures to ensure guests represented a politically correct view that blamed terrorists and not all Muslims. A booking agent explained that CNN would not feature a guest "who's angry at Muslims" because "that's not balanced, that's not what we do."[45] Contrarian, extreme, or different perspectives were not given airtime. In 2005, radio talk show host Michael Graham called "Islam a terrorist organization" and shortly thereafter received his termination notice.[46] His employers explained, "Some of Michael's statements about Islam went over the line."[47]

Evidence of Cognitive Impediments

Discourse on America's counterterrorism approach tended to be stifled and reflected groupthink tendencies. In other words, individuals and organizations tended to censure their comments. Those who voiced contradictory opinions were attacked by others who appointed themselves as the defenders of the majority or consensus opinion. The debate that emerged in public discourse centered on whether America should target bin Laden and al-Qaeda specifically or take a broader approach and fight simultaneous wars in Afghanistan and Iraq to contain terrorism at its root.[48]

Bush and his supporters argued, "We are pursuing a comprehensive strategy to win the War on Terror. We're taking the fight to the terrorists abroad so we do not have to

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[44] Nacos,163.

[45] Kirsten Mogensen, "How U.S. TV Journalists Talk about Objectivity in 9/11 Coverage" in *How the World's Media Reacted to 9/11: Essays from Around the Globe*, edited by Tomasz Pludowski, (Spokane, WA: Marquette Books LLC, 2007), 308.

[46] Paul Farhi, "Talk Show Host Graham Fired by WMAL Over Islam Remarks," *Washington Post*, 23 August 2005, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/08/22/AR2005082201255.html. (*Chicago,* 17.198)

[47] Farhi, "Graham Fired."

[48] Peter Finn, Ian Shapira and Marc Fisher, "Victory Built on Lessons Learned from the Enemy," *Washington Post*, 6 May 2011.

face them here at home."[49] In the aftermath of the 11-September attacks, Bush and other

senior administration officials believed that America must immediately address the threat

Iraq posed because of its links to al-Qaeda and its potential stockpiles of weapons of

mass destruction. On 4 April 2002, during an interview on British television, the

interviewer asked Bush if he had made a decision to attack Iraq. Bush responded, "I made

up my mind that Saddam needs to go." The interviewer then questioned Bush on the

questionable link between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda. Bush interrupted and

answered, "The worst thing that could happen would be to allow a nation like Iraq, run by

Saddam Hussein, to develop weapons of mass destruction and then team up with terrorist

organizations so they can blackmail the world. I'm not going to let that happen."[50]

The lack of understanding regarding al-Qaeda led Bush and other senior

administration officials to consider Iraq as a central element in the War on Terror. Brent

Scowcroft, who served as President George H.W. Bush's national security adviser,

chastised the Bush administration for its misunderstanding and insistence that Iraq had

cooperated and would cooperate with al-Qaeda. In a *Wall Street Journal* article titled

"Don't Attack Saddam" published on 15 August 2002, he wrote:

> But there is scant evidence to tie Saddam to terrorist organizations, and
> even less to the Sept. 11 attacks [*sic*]. Indeed Saddam's goals have little in
> common with the terrorists who threaten us, there is little incentive for
> him to make common cause with them. He is unlikely to risk his
> investment in weapons of mass destruction, much less his country, by
> handing such weapons to terrorists who would use them for their own
> purposes and leave Baghdad as the return address. Threatening to use
> these weapons for blackmail – much less their actual use – would open
> him and his entire regime to a devastating response by the U.S. While
> Saddam is thoroughly evil, he is above all a power-hungry survivor.[51]

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice contacted Scowcroft immediately after the

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[49] President George W. Bush, "Remarks at an Independence Day Celebration in Morgantown, West Virginia," *American Presidency Project*, 4 July 2005, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=63282&st=terror&st1=#ixzz1stWxT7Tg. (*Chicago*, 17.237); "Bush revives, revamps message on fighting terrorists abroad instead of home," *Associated Press*, 23 August 2006, http://www.wsvn.com/news/articles/national/MI27571/. (*Chicago*, 17.198)

[50] Transcript of "Interview of the President by Sir Trevor McDonald of Britain's ITV Television Network," The White House, 4 April 2002, http://www.usembassy.it/file2002_04/alia/a2040709.htm . (*Chicago*, 17.237).

[51] Brent Scowcroft, "Don't Attack Saddam," *Wall Street Journal*, 15 August 2002, http://online.wsj.com/article/0,,SB1029371773228069195.djm,00.html. (Chicago, 17.198)

article's release and rebuked him for its content, which she perceived as hostile to the administration. Scowcroft apologized and commented that "I don't want to break with the administration."[52] Thereafter, Scowcroft censored himself and avoided publicly criticizing the Bush administration.[53]

Other critics continued to question the administration's approach and suffered the consequences. One of the prevailing criticisms was whether operations in Iraq distracted the nation from what should be its primary targets: bin Laden and al-Qaeda. Senator Tom Daschle (D, SD) explained, "The American people need to know whether attacking Iraq has helped our efforts against Al Qaeda [*sic*] and made them more secure."[54] Republicans and Bush Administration supporters attacked these critics, labeling opponent traitors or unpatriotic.[55] Former U.S. Representative John Thune wrote Daschle's constituents and warned that Daschle's comments provide "aid and comfort to the enemy."[56] The Republicans launched a concerted and intense campaign to defeat Senator Daschle for re-election.[57] South Dakota, a state that strongly supported President Bush during the election, had more registered Republicans than Democrats, and provided the largest proportion nationally of troops to the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, was not a guaranteed win for Daschle in 2004.[58] His opponents exploited the precarious situation and launched a campaign of negative advertisements that not only criticized Daschle's lack of support

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[52] Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 2004), 160.

[53] Woodward, Plan of Attack, 160.

[54] Interestingly, in spite of his criticism, Daschle voted for the resolution authorizing the president to use force against Iraq. William Neikirk, "Daschle challenges strategy of terror war," *Chicago Tribune*, 1 March 2002, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2002-03-01/news/0203010321_1_sen-daschle-anti-terrorism-president-bush. (*Chicago*, 17.198); Transcript of *PBS NewsHour* with Jim Lehrer, "Dissention and War," 19 March 2003, http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/politics/jan-june03/dissent_03-19.html. (*Chicago*, 17.237); and Senator Tom Daschle, "Statement of Senate Democratic Leader Tom Daschle on the War on Terrorism," 24 March 2004, http://www.buzzflash.com/contributors/04/03/con04130.html. (*Chicago*, 17.237)

[55] Groupthink did not exist simply because Congress voted unanimously. I argue that groupthink existed based on how the majority reacted to those who deviated from the majority position or opinion. These individuals were attacked using emotional appeals and not facts in an attempt to shame or punish them. While political motivation may account for some of the slander, the language and its emphasis on conforming to cohesion served to reinforce groupthink tendencies. Thus, even if groupthink was not the initial motivation, the attack perpetuated a de facto groupthink in its demonstrated effect to other would be defectors.

[56] "Daschle, Thune clash over Iraq, leadership in national debate," *PBS NewsHour*, 20 September 2004, http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/sd_09-20-04.html. (*Chicago*, 17.237)

[57] Kirk Victor, "Fighting for His Life," *National Journal* 36, no. 42 (16 October 2004): 3124-3131; Jason Vest, "Destroying Tom Daschle," Rolling Stone, no. 891 (14 March 2002): 39-42.

[58] Terry Robertson, "A Perfect Storm: A Case Study Analysis of the Defeat of Tom Daschle by John Thune in the 2004 South Dakota Senate Race," *American Behavioral Scientist* 49, no. 2 (October 2005): 326-342.

of the administration and the War on Terror, but also conveyed the message that he no longer represented the conservative state's values. He had lost touch with South Dakota and become a Washington insider.[59] These and other factors coalesced to bring about his defeat after serving 18 years in the Senate. Daschle became the first top Senate leader to lose re-election since 1952.[60]

Some seasoned reporters even admitted that groupthink limited their perspectives, but noted that they had little other choice. Prior to the Iraq War, there were few sources of information outside of the administration, which kept its information tightly protected. During the war, the administration allowed journalists to become embedded with units. Reporters' field of vision remained within the parameters the administration set. Journalist and author Bob Woodward said, "You couldn't get beyond the veneer and hurdle of what this groupthink had already established."[61] Those who ventured beyond the established limits were attacked. According to reporter Dana Priest, "skeptical stories usually triggered hate mail questioning your patriotism and suggesting that you somehow be delivered into the hands of the terrorists."[62]

Tom Daschle's defeat is also an example of how the public discourse became increasingly toxic and bifurcated along lines of social identity. Americans were enjoined to pick a side. Those who questioned the administration's logic were demonized and categorized as "the other," terrorist sympathizers, or un-American. The lone Congresswoman who voted against the campaign in Afghanistan, Representative Barbara Lee (D, CA), received death threats and was labeled "a communist-sympathizing traitor."[63] Hearkening back to the "witch hunts" against suspected communists during the McCarthy era, the conservative group the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA) developed a black list in 2001 of 117 Americans within academic circles it

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[59] Robertson, 333.

[60] Sheryl Gay Stolberg, "Daschel, Democratic Senate Leader, Is Beaten," *New York Times*, 3 November 2004, http://www.nytimes.com/2004/11/03/politics/campaign/03dakotacnd_.html. (*Chicago*, 17.198)

[61] From the editors, "Times and Iraq," *New York Times*, 26 May 2004, http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/26/international/middleeast/26FTE_NOTE.html?pagewanted=all. (Chicago, 17.198)

[62] "Times and Iraq."

[63] Matthew Vadum, "Communist Lawmaker Barbara Lee Doesn't Want Tax Dollars Spent on Defending America," *NewsRealBlog*, 15 April 2010, http://www.newsrealblog.com/2010/04/15/communist-lawmaker-barbara-lee-doesnt-want-tax-dollars-spent-on-defending-america/. (*Chicago*, 17.237); and Peter Carlson, "The Solitary Vote of Barbara Lee; Congresswoman Against Use of Force," *Washington Post*, 19 September 2001.

considered unpatriotic because they did not fully endorse or rally to the President's call for war. ACTA claimed that these un-American individuals were advocating "tolerance and diversity as antidotes to evil…[pointing] accusatory fingers, not at the terrorists, but at America itself."[64] The struggle within the United States was increasingly a battle between "us," who whole-heartedly support counter-terrorism policies, versus "them," whose loyalties and motivations became suspect. Even the mildest critics who showed a lack of commitment to "the War on Terror" warranted being blacklisted. Reverend Jesse Jackson made the list for his statement that America "should build bridges and relationships, not simply bombs and walls."[65] In 2006, Democratic House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D, CA) expressed doubt that killing bin Laden would end America's terrorist threat. In reaction, Bush supporters questioned Pelosi's loyalty and labeled her a traitor. Republican Majority Leader John Boehner pondered, are Democrats "more interested in protecting terrorists than in protecting the American people?"[66]

In-groups and out-groups in the War on Terror were not limited to just the domestic context. Bush warned the international community, "Every nation has a choice to make. In this conflict, there is no neutral ground."[67] Nations could join either America or the "axis of evil."[68] Because France opposed America's war against Iraq, Representatives Bob Ney (R, OH) and Walter Jones (D, NC) launched a campaign to ban the word "French" from the menus of House cafeterias. French fries became "freedom fries," and French toast, "freedom toast." Representative Ney explained, "This action … is a small, but symbolic effort to show the strong displeasure of many on Capitol Hill with the actions of our so-called ally, France."[69]

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[64] Emily Eakin, "An Organization on the Lookout or Patriotic Incorrectness," *New York Times*, 24 November 2001, http://www.nytimes.com/2001/11/24/arts/24LIST.html. (*Chicago*, 17.198); and Eric Scigliano, "Naming—and Un-naming—Names," *The Nation* 273, no. 22 (31 December 2001): 16.

[65] Eakin, "Political Incorrectness."

[66] Dana Milbank, "Democrats Meander in a New New Direction," *Washington Post,* 15 September 2006, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/09/14/AR2006091401575.html. (*Chicago*, 17.198)

[67] Edward J. Lordan, *The Case for Combat: How Presidents Persuade Americans to go to War* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2010), 273.

[68] Lordan, 275.

[69] Sean Loughlin, "House cafeterias change names for 'french' fries and 'french' toast," *CNN.com*, 12 March 2003, http://articles.cnn.com/2003-03-11/politics/sprj.irq.fries_1_freedom-toast-french-fries-and-french-freedom-fries?_s=PM:ALLPOLITICS. (*Chicago*, 17.198)

The public discourse also reflected elements of cognitive closure to new information. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld said, "Unless something is jarring, you tend to stay on your track and get it reinforced rather than recalibrated."[70] His statement describes the Bush Administration's *modus operandi* regarding national security and foreign policy threats. President Bush, Vice President Cheney, the Secretary of Defense, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, and Secretary of State Colin Powell continued to argue that there was a link or a "sinister nexus" between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda.[71] The administration and its supporters continued to repeat unsubstantiated and circumstantial claims about the links and treat them as if they were facts. Rumsfeld said, "There are al-Qaeda in a number of locations in Iraq. … It's very hard to imagine the [Iraqi] government is not aware of what's taking place in the country."[72] Rumsfeld was referring to locations not under Iraqi central government control, but rather under the control of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan. For over a decade, American air power had enforced a northern "no-fly zone" and protected the Kurds from Saddam's military. Rumsfeld conveniently neglected these facts. In his speech to the United Nation, Powell alleged that Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was an al-Qaeda associate operating in Iraq along with the indigenous extremist group Ansar al-Islam. While Powell acknowledged that the area where al-Zarqawi operated was beyond Saddam's control, he added, "Baghdad has an agent in the most senior levels of the radical organization, Ansar al-Islam, that controls this corner of Iraq. In 2000 this agent offered Al Qaida [*sic*] safe haven in the region."[73] As discussed in the previous chapter, al-Qaeda was one of many terrorist groups operating in Afghanistan.

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[70] Jeffrey Goldberg, "The Unknown; The C.I.A. and the Pentagon take another look at Al Qaeda and Iraq," *The New Yorker*, 10 February 2003.

[71] Romesh Ratnesar, et al., "The Iraq & Al-Qaeda is There a Link?" *Time International*, 2 September 2002, Issue 34. Colin Powell did express reservations about the war plans against Iraq and was skeptical of the link between Saddam and al-Qaeda. He delivered the UN speech in which he eloquently argued and convinced the international and national community that a war against Iraq was justified. Bush, *Decisive Points*, 251; "Powell presents US case to Security Council of Iraq's failure to disarm," *UN News Centre*, 5 February 2003, http://www.un.org/apps/news/storyAr.asp?NewsID=6079&Cr=iraq&Cr1=inspect. (*Chicago*, 17.198); and Ole R. Holsti, *American Public Opinion on the Iraq War* (Ann Harbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2011), 51-52.

[72] Ratnesar, et al., "The Iraq & Al-Qaeda is There a Link?"

[73] Transcript of Colin Powell's "UN Speech to the United Nations," Washington Post, 5 February 2003, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/nation/transcripts/powelltext_020503.html. (*Chicago*, 17.198)

Most groups cooperated and had common associates. As will become clear in later sections, al-Zarqawi operated independently of al-Qaeda prior to the Iraq War.

Experts raised doubts publically that such links existed.[74] The Central Intelligence Agency, the one government organization that tracked al-Qaeda from its inception to maturation, was skeptical of a link but acknowledged that the parties did have some contact in the past and it is possible that a relationship could develop.[75] Other experts categorically rejected the notion. Peter Bergen, who conducted the first Western interview of bin Laden and authored *Holy War, Inc: Inside the Secret World of Osama bin Laden*, rejected the proposition that bin Laden had any meaningful cooperation with Saddam Hussein.[76]

As a result of cognitive closure, most of these expert critics were marginalized, uncovered, or had their comments buried within newspapers or other news programming. The administration's comments, however, were accepted with minimal scrutiny and received front-page coverage. Pentagon correspondent Thomas Ricks explained, "Administration assertions were on the front page. Things that challenged the administration were on A18 on Sunday or A24 on Monday. There was an attitude among editors: Look, we're going to war, why do we even worry about all this contrary stuff?"[77] The media reported the administration's position and those of their supporters. Opposing views were given little coverage. Executive Editor at the *Washington Post* Leonard Downie, Jr., said, "we were so focused on trying to figure out what the administration was doing that we were not giving the same play to people who … were questioning the administration's rationale. … The voices raising questions about the war were lonely ones. … We didn't pay enough attention."[78] In an unusual example of public self-criticism, the editors of the *New York Times* wrote that their reporters had failed to

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[74] Richard A. Clarke, *Against All Enemies: Inside America's War on Terror* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 33.

[75] Stephen F. Hayes, "Saddam's al Qaeda Connection," *The Weekly Standard* 8, no. 48 (1 September 2002). http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/003/033jgqyi.asp?nopager=1. (*Chicago*, 17.181)

[76] Transcript of a radio broadcast, Alison Caldwell, "Experts say no evidence of al-Qaeda, Hussein link," *The World Today*, 18 June 2004, http://www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2004/s1135079.htm. (*Chicago*, 17.237)

[77] Howard Kurtz, "The Post on WMDs: An Inside Story," *Washington Post*, 12 August 2004, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A58127-2004Aug11.html. (*Chicago*, 17.198)

[78] Kurtz, "The Post on WMDs."

independently verify the source of one of its articles that was used to justify the war and claimed that a link between Iraq and al-Qaeda existed. They admitted that "In some cases, information that was controversial then, and seems questionable now, was insufficiently qualified or allowed to stand unchallenged. Looking back, we wish we had been more aggressive in re-examining the claims as new evidence emerged — or failed to emerge."[79]

The media were not alone in their collective cognitive closure. The administration clung to its position that an operational relationship existed and launched its invasion of Iraq in March 2003. Within a few months of the Iraq War, captured al-Qaeda leaders denied there was a tie.[80] A year later, *the 9/11 Commission Report* concluded that there was no credible evidence that an operational relationship between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda existed.[81] A 2007 Pentagon report on confiscated Iraqi documents revealed that while Saddam Hussein supported terrorist groups in the past, there were no direct connections with al-Qaeda.[82] In June 2004, Bush defended his position, saying, "The reason I keep insisting that there was a relationship between Iraq and Saddam and al-Qaeda is because there was a relationship between Iraq and al-Qaeda."[83] In his 2009 book, *Decision Points*, Bush stubbornly held fast to the idea that "Saddam could have turned to Sunni terrorist groups like al-Qaeda."[84] Many of those at the highest level of the Bush administration could not overcome their personal cognitive closure that the evidence did not support their conclusions. No such relationship materialized, and to suggest otherwise was pure conjecture. Yet they managed to turn their personal cognitive closure to a collective cognitive closure by shaping public discourse and persuading the

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[79] "Times and Iraq."

[80] Michael Isikoff and Mark Hosenball, "Who Knew What When?" *Newsweek* 141, no. 25 (23 June 2003): 4.

[81] *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2004), 61, 66, 125, 128, 134, 334.

[82] Kevin M. Woods and James Lacey, *Iraq: Perspectives Project. Saddam and Terrorism: Emerging Insights from Captured Iraqi Documents,* vol. 1, IDA Paper P-4287 (Alexandria, VA: Institute for Defense Analyses, November 2007). The report is also available from: http://media.mcclatchydc.com/smedia/2008/03/14/12/IraqPerspectivesProject.source.prod_affiliate.91.pdf. (*Chicago*, 17.237)

[83] "Bush disputes 9/11-Iraq findings," *BBC*, 17 June 2004, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/3816699.stm. (*Chicago*, 17.198); and Walter Pincus and Dana Milbank, "Bush Reasserts Hussein-Al Qaeda Link," *Washington Post*, 17 June 2004, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A48970-2004Jun17.html. (*Chicago*, 17.198)

[84] Bush, *Decision Points*, 270.

majority of Americans. After listening to Powell's UN speech, a Bush critic and columnist remarked, "I can only say that he persuaded me, and I was as tough as France to convince. … Colin Powell has convinced me that it [war] might be the only way to stop a fiend, and that if we do go, there is reason."[85]

Consequences

The aforementioned cognitive impediments undermined public discourse's ability to balance and influence government policy and public opinion. This consequence reduced scrutiny of government policies. Additionally, new ideas did not clash with previous ideas to produce a refined understanding of al-Qaeda. Public discourse was muzzled. Absent from public discourse was a continuous debate prior to the Iraq War on whether attacking Iraq would aid in destroying al-Qaeda. The few attempts to engage in such dialogue were silenced due to groupthink, social identity, and cognitive closure. Groupthink encouraged elites to embrace the Bush Administration's understanding of the situation and to accept its prescriptions with minimal critical analysis. Those who incited debate and questioned fundamental assumptions were marginalized. Similarly, social identity ensured that discourse lost its focus. Americans responded patriotically and took a tough stance on terrorism individually and collectively. In fact, advocacy for non-military solutions, such as international diplomacy, or suggestions that differed from the Bush Administration's proposals were labeled "unpatriotic" and "soft." Thus, rather than come to an understanding through debate about the threat America faced and what should be done about it, public discourse subordinated its role to government policies. Cognitive closure helped to keep the public discourse quiet until after the commencement of the Iraq War and following the deterioration of the security situations in Iraq and Afghanistan. In the absence of a public discourse that challenged the government's policies and helped set the parameters for understanding and viable solutions, the Bush Administration faced little opposition in pushing its interpretation, and this led to the Iraq War and strengthen al-Qaeda.

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[85] Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 311-312.

Public Opinion

Americans had long feared terrorism but public trepidation of this form of political violence ranked low among other pressing priorities such as the economy. The 11-September attacks changed this perception. Terrorism not only became real for most Americans; the scale of the violence, and audacity of the attack, shocked citizens throughout the country. Visions of dead Americans and destruction on American soil had a profound psychological impact on Americans and evoked visceral reactions. In surveys taken from October 2001 to March 2002, 47.1 percent felt anxious, 31.2 percent felt scared, 49.9 worried, and 30 percent were frightened as a result of the terrorist attacks.[86] Moreover, 78 percent thought that a future attack was likely.[87]

Initially, Americans overwhelmingly supported the Bush Administration's policies. Bush's approval rating went from 55 to 86 percent by late September 2001.[88] From October 2001 until March 2002, nearly 90 percent supported the government's military response in Afghanistan.[89] Another survey found that 88 percent approved Bush's handling of terrorism.[90] There was great confidence in the government. A Washington Post-ABC poll immediately after the attack found that 91 percent of those surveyed were confident that the government was capable of significantly reducing the terrorist risk.[91] In October 2001, 76 percent of Americans surveyed expressed confidence that America would capture bin Laden.[92]

Evidence of Cognitive Impediments

Public opinion during the first few months after 9/11 reflected strong group cohesion. Faced with an external threat, the nation responded as a cohesive unit. Across the political spectrum, Americans rallied around the flag and the Bush Administration.

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[86] Leonie Huddy, et al, "Fear and Terrorism: Psychological Reactions to 9/11," in *Framing Terrorism: The News Media, the Government and the Public*, edited by Pippa Norris, Montague Kern and Marion Just (New York: Taylor and Francis Books, Inc., 2003), 261.

[87] Leonie Huddy, Nadia Khatib, and Theresa Capelos, "The Polls-Trends: Reactions to the Terrorist Attacks of September 11, 2001," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 66 (2002): 420.

[88] Bob Woodward, *Bush at War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 2002), 206; Lordan, 266; "Reviewing the Bush Years and the Public's Final Verdict: Bush and Public Opinion," *Pew Research Center: For the People & Press*, 18 December 2008, 1, http://www.people-press.org/files/legacy-pdf/478.pdf. (*Chicago*, 17.237)

[89] Huddy, "The Polls-Trends," 423.

[90] Huddy, "Fear and Terrorism," 270

[91] Huddy, "Fear and Terrorism," 254.

[92] Huddy, "The Polls-Trends," 424.

During an interview on CNN, pop star Britney Spear suggested: "I think we should just trust the president in every decision he makes, and we should just support that, and be faithful in what happens."[93] Her statement captured the opinion of a majority of Americans surveyed from late 2001 to 2003.[94] Those who failed to conform to this perspective were denigrated. Peter Arnett lost his NBC News job in 2003 when he offered his personal opinion during an Iraqi television interview. Arnett said that America's plan in Iraq was failing and the amount of opposition against Bush and the war were increasing. In a statement, NBC explained its decision to fire Arnett stating, "It was wrong for him [Arnett] to discuss his personal observations and opinions in that interview [during a time of war and on Iraqi television]."[95] White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischer warned, "People have to watch what they say and watch what they do."[96]

Similarly, Bill Maher, talk show host of ABC's *Politically Incorrect*, got into trouble when he failed to adhere to the patriotic narrative that Americans were the courageous victims and al-Qaeda and bin Laden were the evil villains. To suggest an alternate interpretation was unnecessary and unwelcomed. On 17 September 2001, while interviewing Dinesh D'Souza, a conservative scholar and author, Maher reiterated D'Souza's comments and said, "We have been the cowards. Lobbing cruise missiles from two thousand miles away. That's cowardly. Staying in the airplane when it hits the building. Say what you want about it. Not cowardly. You're right."[97] Maher was a dissenting voice during the period.[98] He fell out of step with most of his fellow citizens when he suggested that the favorable word "courageous" could apply to a group other than the in-group or Americans; that adjective was reserved for the exclusive use of

[93] Jonathan Alter, "Time for a New Patriotism?" *Newsweek*, 15 September 2003. 52.
[94] "Reviewing the Bush Years and the Public's Final Verdict," 1.
[95] "Arnett Fired for Iraqi TV Interview," *PBS NewsHour*, 31 March 2003, http://www.pbs.org/newshour/media/media_watch/jan-june03/arnett_3-31.html. (*Chicago*, 17.237)
[96] Celestine Bohlen, "Think Tank; In New War on Terrorism, Words are Weapons, Too," *New York Times*, 29 September 2001, http://www.nytimes.com/2001/09/29/arts/think-tank-in-new-war-on-terrorism-words-are-weapons-too.html. (*Chicago*, 17.198); and Jaclyn Sakow, "The Cancelation of Bill Maher's "Politically Incorrect," 3 October 2007, http://mediacrit.wetpaint.com/page/The+Cancellation+of+Bill+Maher's+%22Politically+Incorrect%2. (*Chicago*, 17.237)
[97] Chris Raphael, "Politically Incorrect: A Eulogy," *The Big Story*, 3 June 2002, http://thebigstory.org/ov/ov-politicallyincorrect.html. (*Chicago*, 17.237)
[98] Raphael, "Politically Incorrect."

Americans. Bin Laden and his minions were "murderers," "barbaric criminals," "cowardly," and "evil;" they were not, according to the consensus, "courageous."[99]

Arnett and Maher's tribulations were indicative of a broader trend within America. Mainstream media, including print and television journalists, aligned themselves after 9/11 with the prevailing, nationalist and patriotic form of social identity in the country. In the process of reporting on terrorism and the heroism of those sacrificed during the terrorist attacks or who responded to it, many of those within the media lost their objectivity and journalistic perspective. FOX News Anchor Shepard Smith explained, "Every story you cover has two sides; this one [11-September attacks] didn't [*sic*] … There is nothing I could think of that we, as a people or … as a government, could have done to make anyone be able to shape the argument that it would have been OK to retaliate in such a manner. Therefore, this conflict in my mind didn't have two sides."[100] In addition, to guarantee access to exclusive stories craved by the public about their country's secretive responses to terrorism, a number of news outlets and reporters further sacrificed their objectivity by seeking to embed themselves with soldiers and their units. Gritty reports on tactical actions, broadcast almost immediately, replaced the careful gathering and checking of facts, as well as analysis of them, to provide media reporting that placed specific events in context. The media in this way acted as a crucial link in the emergent social identity after 9/11 between senior members of the Bush administration and the American public. Only after the watershed events of Abu Ghraib, and the absence of evidence of an Iraqi WMD program, did many publically and within the media begin to question and challenge significantly the prevailing narrative coming out of the White House.

While the early consensus fractured over time, groupthink calcified some thinking. In September 2003, 57 percent of Americans believed that Saddam Hussein was directly involved in the 9/11 attacks or provided support to al-Qaeda.[101] Even after the release of the *9/11 Commission Report* and the Pentagon's report of Iraqi captured documents, both of which reported no operational relationship between Hussein and al-

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[99] Lordan, 269, 273. Woodward, *Bush at War,* 310. Bush, *Decision Points*, 474.
[100] Quoted in Mogensen, 310.
[101] Steven Kull, "Misperceptions, the Media and the Iraq War," *The PIPA/Knowledge Networks Poll*, 2 October 2003, 3, http://www.pipa.org/OnlineReports/Iraq/IraqMedia_Oct03/IraqMedia_Oct03_rpt.pdf. (*Chicago*, 17.237)

Qaeda, some Americans continued to believe in the partnership. Polls taken from 2007 to 2009 revealed that 31 to 45 percent of those polled believed that there had been a link between the dictator and al-Qaeda.[102] In April 2008, Republican Senator Jon Kyl (R, AZ) cited the same evidence Bush critics used to argue that the link was real. Kyl argued that the media dismissed the vast volume of evidence contained in the report suggesting that Saddam had links to terrorists. Instead, he alleged that the media focused narrowly on one line from the report. Kyl wrote: "One of the few items that did appear discounted the myriad links between Saddam Hussein and terrorist organizations that were exposed in the report. Astonishingly, *it* reported that there was no 'smoking gun' linking al Qaeda [*sic*] and Saddam Hussein [italics added]."[103] Kyl's writing seemed to suggest that "it" or the media concluded there was "no 'smoking gun'" in spite of the report's findings to the contrary. His reading of the report, however, was selective. He obfuscated the distinction the report was careful to make, which was that Saddam had connections with terrorists of different stripes, but no direct operational relationship with al-Qaeda. The complete sentence from the report read: "This study found no "smoking gun" (i.e., direct connection) between Saddam's Iraq and al Qaeda [*sic*]."[104] Kyl, like a substantial minority of Americans, could not overcome his personal cognitive closure and reassess his conclusions when confronted with new information. Instead, he filtered and distorted information to fit his pre-existing schemata.

Consequences

Public opinion during this period was passive and generally mirrored the debates occurring in public discourse; this provided the Bush Administration freedom of action for war. With few competing narratives, public opinion accepted and embraced the dominant narrative the Bush Administration offered. While an active public opinion could have influenced government policy by constricting the administration's choices if it became hostile, public opinion remained dormant and became corrupted by groupthink, social identity, and cognitive closure. These cognitive impediments ensured that public

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[102] Holsti, 59.

[103] Jon Kyle, "More Proof of Saddam's Ties to Terrorists," *Real Clear Politics*, 22 April 2008, http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2008/04/more_proof_of_saddams_ties_to.html. (*Chicago*, 17.237)

[104] Woods, S-2

opinion would remain ineffectual and, therefore, not a counterweight to government policies. As the preceding section suggests, the media itself was also largely aligned and complicit in the sustainment of cognitive closure and the maintenance of social identity. The Bush Administration advanced its understanding of al-Qaeda and the government policies necessary to address the problem unchallenged. Bush was intent on acting quickly, seizing the initiative and leading public opinion to support his administration's war against Iraq. He said, "public opinion will change [if I/leaders do not seize the moment]. We lead our publics. We cannot follow our publics."[105] Without public discourse or public opinion to serve as brake pads, America sped to war with Iraq and prolonged its fight with al-Qaeda.

Government Policy

When Bush assumed the presidency, al-Qaeda and bin Laden were not at the forefront of his concerns. Instead, a missile defense shield to protect the homeland against rogue states such as Iraq and North Korea was a key defense policy concern.[106] Al-Qaeda and bin Laden were threats, but not among the top three security priorities. The president explained, "I knew he [bin Laden] was a menace … but I didn't [*sic*] feel that sense of urgency, and my blood was not nearly as boiling."[107] The 11-September attacks soon changed his calculus. Bin Laden and al-Qaeda became his number-one enemy and primary target. He declared that his government policies would break with historical precedent. "Our response," he explained, "would not be a pinprick cruise missile strike. … We would do more than put 'a million-dollar missile on a five-dollar tent.'"[108] The president intended to unleash the full weight of America's power against its adversaries.[109]

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[105] Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 2004), 296.

[106] Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, From the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 547; and Eric Schmitt and Thom Shanker, *Counter Strike: The Untold Story of America's Secret Campaign against Al Qaeda* (New York: Times Book, 2011), 25.

[107] Woodward, *Bush at War*, 39.

[108] Bush, *Decisive Points*, 135.

[109] Marc A. Thiessen, ed., *A Charge Kept: The Record of the Bush Presidency 2001-2009, 3*, http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/bushrecord/documents/charge-kept.pdf. (*Chicago*, 17.237) This section is not all-inclusive and focuses primarily on Bush's dominant approach, which were offensive measures. The Bush Administration also took measures that included diplomatic, information, and economic efforts to combat terrorism. For instance, the president signed an executive order to freeze

The Bush Administration's dominant foreign policy became to preemptively attack terrorists, their infrastructure, and supporters. Bush warned, "We will make no distinction between those who planned these acts [of terrorism] and those who harbor them."[110] Bush rejected the notion that members of al-Qaeda were deterrable.[111] Consequently, his policies focused on capturing or killing al-Qaeda operatives. In addition to commencing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, he provided the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Central Intelligence Agency, and Intelligence Community the authorities and resources they requested. For example, he promoted the Patriot Act, which gave the National Security Agency more authority to conduct domestic surveillance operations against suspected terrorists and their affiliates.[112] Overall, the Bush Administration invested $81.2 billion annually for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and an additional $81 billion annually for the Intelligence Community.[113] These were extraordinary expenditures to destroy al-Qaeda, a force estimated to number 20,000 *mujahedeen* in its heyday.[114] Nonetheless, the Bush Administration was determined and spared no expense to eliminate the threat bin Laden and al-Qaeda posed.

Evidence of Cognitive Impediments

While the majority in Congress came to see al-Qaeda as a major and real threat, some doubted that the threat warranted granting the Bush Administration unfettered authority for armed conflict. In spite of these reservations, an overwhelming majority in Congress passed the resolution authorizing the president "to use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned,

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terrorist financing. A concise summary of the Bush Administration's counterterrorism efforts is available in Thiessen, 3-17. Of note, the document is biased to highlight the positive programs implemented by Bush.

[110] Woodward, *Obama's War*, 45.

[111] Schmitt and Shanker, 4.

[112] *Patriot Act*, Public Law No: 107-56. 107th Cong., 2nd sess., 26 October 2001, http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-107publ56/pdf/PLAW-107publ56.pdf (Chicago, 17.237)

[113] Amy Belasco, "The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11," *Congressional Research Service*, RL33110, 29 March 2011, 3, http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL33110.pdf. (*Chicago*, 17.237) Donald R. Byrne and Edward T. Derbin, ed., "The National Debt, the Federal Deficit, and the Fiscal Drag," *Economic Newsletter for the New Millennium* 2003, no. 4 (18 November 2003): 1. http://byrned.faculty.udmercy.edu/2003%20Volume,%20Issue%204/Newsletter%20Volume%202003%20Issue%204%20Complete.pdf. (Chicago, 17.237); Dana Priest and William Arkin, *Top Secret America: The Rise of the New American, Security State*, (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2011), 39.

[114] Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York, N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 2006), 365 n. 77.

authorized, committed or aided [al-Qaeda]." [115] The authorization was broad and gave the president considerable latitude even before a full collection and appraisal of facts. Some Congressmen acknowledged this knowledge gap and suggested that America needed to understand its enemy before rushing to battle. On the day of the vote, Congressman Ron Paul (R, TX) said: "But for us to pursue a war against our enemies it's crucial to understand why we were attacked, which then will tell us by whom we were attacked. Without this knowledge, striking out at six or eight or even ten different countries could well expand this war of which we wanted no part. Without defining the enemy there is no way to know our precise goal or to know when the war is over. Inadvertent or casual acceptance of civilian deaths by us as part of this war I'm certain will prolong the agony and increase the chances of even more American casualties. We must guard against this if at all possible."[116] In the end, Congressman Paul and most members of Congress voted for the resolution. Only one Senator broke from the pack and voted against the resolution.

Surely, the real threat of a violent, capable, and determined enemy galvanized and unified policy makers, but even as the perception of the threat subsided with a better understanding of its true nature and domestic consensus proved more difficult to obtain, Bush continued to enjoy majority Congressional support for his counterterrorism policies. Congress approved the Patriot Act, the Military Commission Act of 2006, and the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) 2008, which respectively permitted warrantless searches and interviews of Americans; suspended habeas corpus for detained enemy combatants; and facilitated domestic intelligence surveillance of American citizens and residents.[117] Even dubious cases with weak links to terrorism, such as the

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[115] *Authorization for Use of Military Force*, Public Law 107-40. 107th Cong., 2nd sess., 18 September 2001, S.J. Res. 23, sec. 2. A copy of the law is available at http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-107publ40/pdf/PLAW-107publ40.pdf. (*Chicago*, 17.237)

[116] Transcript of Congressman Ron Paul's statement on the Congressional Authorization, 14 September 2001. Available from http://www.thepoliticalguide.com/Profiles/House/Texas/Ron_Paul/Views/The_War_in_Afghanistan/. (*Chicago*, 17.237)

[117] The votes for these laws were are follows: <u>Patriot Act</u>: Senate (2001), 98 yes-1 no; Senate (2006), 89 yes-10 no; House (2001), 357 yes-66 no (9 no vote); House (2006), 280-yes-138 no (14 no vote). <u>Military Commissions Act 2006</u>: Senate, 65 yes-34 no; House, 250 yes-70 no. <u>FISA 2008</u>: Senate, 69 yes-28 no (3 no vote), House, 293 yes-129 no (13 no vote). Sources: Patriot Act: http://educate-yourself.org/cn/patriotact20012006senatevote.shtml. Military Commissions Act: http://www.newcriterion.com/posts.cfm/President-Obama-and-the-Supreme-Court-6756. FISA: Senate, http://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_lists/roll_call_vote_cfm.cfm?congress=110&session=2&vote=00168; House, http://www.govtrack.us/congress/votes/110-2008/h437. (*Chicago*, 17.237); *Military*

Iraq War, enjoyed majority support within the legislative branches, the media, and the public.

Groupthink prevailed in part because many feared that if they dissented, they would be labeled "soft" on security or disloyal.[118] Secretary of State Colin Powell had strong misgivings about the veracity of the links between Iraq and al-Qaeda, but he still delivered a UN speech making a convincing case that such connections did in fact exist.[119] The pressure to conform to the group's thinking overshadowed his judgment. When asked years later to defend his position, he explained, "I can't go on a long patrol and then say 'never mind.'"[120] So, even if the patrol was headed in the wrong direction, Powell chose to conform and stay with the group despite his significant personal misgivings. This fixation to present a unified front against terrorism, meanwhile, suppressed discussion and exploration of more rational and objective assessments of the enemy and the best approach to defeat al-Qaeda.[121]

While Bush promised to be a "unifier," his policies divided the world into opposing camps of friend or foe, fighter or defeatist, patriot or turncoat.[122] If you did not support the administration and the country, said Bush and his associates, then you provided sympathy and support to terrorists. During a speech, he cautioned the audience, "Democrats' approach in Iraq comes down to this: The terrorists win and America loses."[123] Everyone had to pick a side or social identity. Pakistani President Pervez Musharaf chose to side with America since "if we chose the terrorists, then we should be

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Commissions Act of 2006, Public Law 109-366. 109th Cong., 2nd sess., 17 October 2006, http://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Military_Law/pdf/PL-109-366.pdf. (*Chicago*, 17.237); Electronic Privacy Information Center. "Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA)." http://epic.org/privacy/terrorism/fisa/ (*Chicago*, 17.237)

[118] Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 39, 164.

[119] Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 23. Transcript of Secretary of State Colin Powell's speech to the UN on 5 February 2003. Available from *Washington Post*, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/nation/transcripts/powelltext_020503.html. (*Chicago*, 17.198)

[120] Karen DeYoung, *Soldier: The Life of Colin Powell* (New York: Vintage Books, 2007), 12.

[121] Bush wrote of Colin Powell in his memoire that, "I admired Colin, but it sometimes seemed like the State Department he led wasn't fully on board with my philosophy and policies. It was important to me that there be no daylight between the president and the secretary of state." Bush, *Decision Points*, 90.

[122] Jessica Reaves, "Is Bush Really Mr. Unifier?" *Time*, 15 December 2000, http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,92048,00.html. (*Chicago*, 17.187)

[123] Michael Abramowitz, "Bush Says 'America Loses' Under Democrats," *Washington Post*, 31 October 2006, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/10/30/AR2006103000530.html. (*Chicago*, 17.198)

prepared to be bombed [by America] back to the Stone Age."[124] Karl Rove, the White
House Senior Advisor, described the opposing camps as follows: "Conservatives saw the
savagery of 9/11 … and prepared for war; liberals saw the savagery … and wanted to
prepare an indictment and offer therapy and understanding for our attackers. …
Conservatives saw what happened to us on 9/11 and said: We will defeat our enemies.
Liberals saw what happened to us and said: We must understand our enemies."[125] In
other words, liberals were defeatists and soft on terrorists. In the end, Bush acknowledged
that he helped create a divisive environment. He wrote, "My one regret about the
PATRIOT Act is its name. … There was an implication that people who opposed the law
were unpatriotic. That was not what I intended."[126]

The case of Georgia Senator Max Cleland (D, GA) exemplifies how antagonistic
politics during the period became. Senator Cleland voted against the Patriot Act in
2005.[127] Bush supporters launched a smear campaign against the senator, calling him
unpatriotic. Cleland, a Vietnam veteran who lost both his legs and an arm in the conflict,
was dumbfounded.[128] His political opponents broadcasted television commercials that
began with a screen depicting the pictures of bin Laden and Saddam Hussein, then these
faded to show Cleland's picture. The audio questioned if the senator "has the courage to
lead" and highlighted that he had failed to support Bush 11 times on homeland-security
issues.[129] In other words, this disabled veteran did not have the courage to fight
terrorism. He dared to question Bush and his policies. The senator lost his seat to Saxby
Chambliss in 2006.

[124] John Chalmers, "Analysis: With us or against us? A decade on, Pakistan wavering," *Reuters*, 9
September 2011, http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/09/10/us-sept11-pakistan-usa-
idUSTRE7890HS20110910. (*Chicago*, 17.198)

[125] Holsti, 96-97.

[126] Bush, *Decision Points*, 162. For more on dissent within the Bush Administration see Daniel Klaidman,
Stuart Taylor Jr. and Even Thomas, "Palace Revolt; they were loyal conservatives, and Bush appointees.
They fought a quiet battle to rein in the president's power in the War on Terror. And they paid a price for
it," *Newsweek*, 6 February 2006, 34.

[127] Charles Babinton, "House Votes to Revise, Extend Patriot Act, Angering Senators," *Washington Post*,
15 December 2005, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-
dyn/content/article/2005/12/14/AR2005121402051.html. (*Chicago*, 17.198)

[128] Max Cleland, "Georgia on My Mind," *Huffington* Post, 28 October 2008,
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/max-cleland/georgia-on-my-mind_b_138496.html. (Chicago, 17.198)

[129] *Chambliss Ad (Cleland),* YouTube video, :31, posted by SoThisisWashignton, 2 August 2006,
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tKFYpd0q9nE.

Senior members of the Bush Administration remained firm in their conviction. Although motivated primarily by reasons best explained as bureaucratic politics and institutional competition, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld established an "Office of Special Plans" within the Pentagon in September 2002. This office separately reviewed and analyzed information regarding Iraq's WMD capabilities to identify its linkages to terrorist groups. The office was created by Paul Wolfowitz and Douglas J. Feith and its establishment, operating procedures, and products provide noteworthy examples of cognitive closure and groupthink in action.[130] Additionally, the administration continued to believe that preemptive and preventive policies made America and the world safer.[131]

Yet, the facts did not conclusively support the Bush Administration's assertion. Though no attacks on American soil happened since the 9/11 attacks, the 2007 *National Intelligence Estimate* report on the terrorist threat to America concluded that al-Qaeda remained a threat and radicalization in the world and America was increasing.[132] In fact, the Iraq War inflamed Muslims around the world and many heeded al-Qaeda's message and sought to harm America and Americans. Muslim Americans were not immune to this call to arms. Omar Hammami, an American Muslim convert from Daphne, Alabama, explained why he came to sympathize with al-Qaeda, and in 2006 left America to join al-Qaeda affiliated al-Shabab in Somalia. Hammami said, "I was finding it difficult to reconcile between having Americans attacking my brothers, at home and abroad, while I was supposed to remain completely neutral, without getting involved."[133] Other American Muslims felt the same and decided to take active roles in opposing American

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[130] For specific details of the office and its operations see Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, "Intelligence Activities Relating to Iraq Conducted by the Policy Counterterrorism Evaluation Group and the Office of Special Plans within the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy," 110th Congress, 2nd Session (Washington, DC: SSCI, June 2008). This report was reviewed, redacted, declassified, and is available on the Committee's website at http://intelligence.senate.gov/080605/phase2b.pdf. (Chicago, 17.237)

[131] Bush, *Decision Points*, 224. For a White House perspective on the argument see Peter Wehner, "Bush Kept U.S. safe, guided nation through turbulent seas," *USA Today*, 16 January 2009. Peter Wehner wrote the article at the White House's request. He was deputy assistant to President Bush.

[132] "The Terrorist Threat to the US Homeland," *National Intelligence Estimate*, July 2007, http://www.dni.gov/press_releases/20070717_release.pdf. (Chicago, 17.237) Joseph Lieberman and Susan Collins "Violent Islamist Extremism, the Internet, and the Homegrown Terrorist Threat," *United States Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs*, 8 May 2008, 2-3, http://www.hsgac.senate.gov//imo/media/doc/IslamistReport.pdf?attempt=2. (*Chicago*, 17.237)

[133] Andrea Elliott, "The Jihadist Next Door," *The New York Times*, 31 January 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/31/magazine/31jihadist-t.html?pagewanted=1&_r=1 . (Chicago, 17.198)

policies. Anwar al-Awlaki, an American born Yemeni-American, was another example. Awlaki, who came to lead al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, called for *jihad* against America because of its Iraq and Afghanistan wars.[134]

Abroad, by 2008, approximately 102,266 Iraqi civilians had been killed as a result of the Iraq War and ensuing insurgency and civil conflicts.[135] In Afghanistan, there were over 3,641 civilian fatalities between 2007 and 2008.[136] The violence also spread to Pakistan. American drone strikes targeting al-Qaeda and Taliban forces in Pakistan killed over 100 Pakistani civilians from 2004 to 2008.[137] A February 2008 poll found that 84 percent of Pakistanis surveyed saw the American presence in South West Asia as a greater threat than either al-Qaeda or the Taliban.[138] They blamed America, not al-Qaeda, for the unfolding violence and instability in Pakistan.[139] A July 2007 opinion poll found similar results; 63 to 93 percent of those surveyed in 11 predominantly Muslim countries

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[134] Scott Shane and Souad Mekhennet, "Imam's Path From Condemning Terror to Preaching Jihad," *New York Times*, 8 May 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/09/world/09awlaki.html?pagewanted=1&_r=1&ref=anwaralawlaki. (Chicago, 17.198)

[135] *Iraq Body Count*, http://www.iraqbodycount.org/database/. (*Chicago*, 17.237)

[136] Susan G. Chesser, "Afghanistan Casualties: Military Forces and Civilians," *Congressional Research Service*, R41084, 3, http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R41084.pdf. (*Chicago*, 17.237)

[137] There are no authoritative figures for the number of Pakistani civilians killed as a result of drone strikes. David Kilcullen claimed that 700 Pakistani civilians have been killed since 2006, but it is unclear the end date of his reporting or his methodology. For reporting on Pakistani casualties see, Thomas J. Billitteri, "Drone Warfare," *CQ Researcher* 20, no. 28 (6 August 2010): 656. http://www.asil.org/files/CQ_DroneWarfare.pdf. (*Chicago*, 17.237); Peter Bergen, Katherine Tiedemann, "Pakistan Drone War Takes a Toll on Militants – and Civilians," *New America Foundation*, 29 October 2009, http://newamerica.net/node/13764. (*Chicago*, 17.237); James Blitz and James Lamont, "Swat outlook 'pretty bleak' for Pakistan," *Financial Times*, 13 May 2009, http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/46c20ab0-3f59-11de-ae4f-00144feabdc0.html#axzz1td9OG4JG. (*Chicago*, 17.198); Pratap Chatterjee, "The CIA's unaccountable drone war claims another casualty," *The Guardian*, 7 November 2011, http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/cifamerica/2011/nov/07/cia-unaccountable-drone-war. (*Chicago*, 17.198). Chatterjee's numbers are the highest reported at 2,300. The *Bureau of Investigative Journalism* keeps track of the number killed. David Pegg, "Drone statistics visualized" *Bureau of Investigative Journalism*, 10 August 2011, http://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/2011/08/10/resources-and-graphs/. (Chicago, 17.237); and Sebastian Abbot, "U.S. drone attacks mostly kill militants, report finds," *Associated Press*, 26 February 2012, http://heraldnet.com/article/20120226/NEWS02/702269917. (*Chicago*, 17.198)

[138] Caroline Wadham, Brian Katulis, Lawrence Korb, and Colin Cookman, "Partnership for Progress: Advancing a New Strategy for Prosperity and Stability in Pakistan and the Region," *Center for American Progress*, November 2008, 18, http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2008/11/pdf/pakistan.pdf. (*Chicago*, 17.237)

[139] Wadham, et. al, 18.

considered America a threat to their national security.[140] In Britain, one of America's staunchest allies, support for the war decreased from 69 percent in 2002 to 38 percent in 2007.[141]

These realities had little effect on those within the Bush Administration. The lack of another expected 9/11 attack was proof, in their minds that their policies were working. Failing to persuade the president to exercise restraint and avoid the Iraq War, Secretary of State Powell came "to realize that this president wasn't one to second-guess himself."[142] His personal cognitive closure prevented him from considering contradictory information. Unfavorable information was ignored or distorted. In 2010 Bush wrote, "For all the difficulties that followed, America is safer without a homicidal dictator pursuing WMD and supporting terror at the heart of the Middle East."[143] Vice President Cheney was more specific in his defense of the administration. He argued, "If it hadn't been for what we did— with respect to the terrorist surveillance program, or enhanced interrogation techniques for high-value detainees, the Patriot Act, and so forth— then we would have been attacked again."[144]

Consequences

Government policy during the Bush Administration operated as the dominant leg in the public-discourse/public-opinion/government-policy triad. Because government policy encountered little resistance from the other legs of the triad, as the preceding sections have made clear, it acted according to its own logic without risk of serious opposition from either public discourse or public opinion. In other words, public discourse and public opinion did not balance government policy and tended to align with it instead. The ideal interaction between the various elements of the triad, checking, moderating, and balancing against each other, did not occur. Government policy influenced and shaped public discourse and public opinion, but the reverse was not true.

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[140] Statement of Michael Leiter, Director for National Counterterrorism Center (NSCTC), in Senate, Hearing before the *Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee*, Hearing on "Roots of Violent Islamist Extremism and Efforts to Counter It," 110th Cong. 2nd sess., 2008, 99.
[141] Leiter, 99.
[142] Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 271.
[143] Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 267.
[144] Peter Bergen, *The Longest War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 2011), 115-116.

Public discourse and public opinion exerted little influence on government policy, particularly during the Bush Administration's first term.

Exacerbating the lack of counterweight to government policy, cognitive impediments assured that government policies would fail to consider alternate perspectives or understandings. Groupthink, social identity and cognitive closure served to tunnel American understanding and discussion to the defense of tangential issues like an individual's or a group's patriotism while government policy proceeded along its course unhindered. The impediments also helped heighten domestic friction and added an unsavory element to rancorous domestic politics. That is, even if there was recognition that the government policies were counterproductive, opponents had a difficult time changing course or imagining an alternative. The cognitive impediments resulted in internalizing of the guiding premises of the government policies; thereafter, the prescriptions became foregone conclusions. Alternatively, if members of Congress accepted that Saddam Hussein was an evil dictator who supported terrorists, it was difficult not to follow and accept the logical conclusion that America should target Iraq as part of its effort to preemptively deter terrorist attacks despite the lack of conclusive evidence. Once the government policy was in place, these cognitive impediments made war with Iraq or other designated, state sponsors of terrorism inevitable.

Furthermore, even if the triad functioned in a balanced manner and cognitive impediments did not serve to impede alternate perspectives, the lens through which the Bush Administration viewed al-Qaeda would have caused the administration to overreact. The Bush Administration viewed al-Qaeda as an enemy in the Hobbesian sense.[145] Al-Qaeda aimed to bring about America's utter destruction. In turn, America would have to endeavor to reciprocate and annihilate al-Qaeda. In this extreme defensive and hostile mindset, all adversaries began to look like covert al-Qaeda hyenas waiting to pounce on America. The Bush Administration conflated its perceived enemies using the rubric of the War on Terror. Following this logic, it was rational to start a war with Iraq. The Bush Administration became the prisoner of its own internal logic and deaf to information or

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[145] According to philosopher Thomas Hobbes, because no Leviathan or authority exists to maintain international order and justly arbitrate among competing powers, life is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short." Men are inherently evil and self-interested. They exist in a "state of war … of all against all." Michael W. Doyle, *Ways of War and Peace: Realism, Liberalism, and Socialism* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), 111-116.

opinion to the contrary. Evoking executive privilege or demanding higher security classifications due to national security concerns, the administration sequestered itself further and minimized external scrutiny, ensuring that the Administration's views remained insular and hyper-defensive.[146] The Bush Administration's government policies reflected its worldview; unfortunately Congress, the media, and the American public adopted this same worldview based on serious lack of understanding or inquiry about the adversary they faced.

Impact on Al-Qaeda

Shortly after the 9/11 attacks, bin Laden boasted that Muslims were flocking to mosques and reading the Koran. Bin Laden believed that al-Qaeda had succeeded in serving as a vanguard and had inspired the *ummah* to rise against the world's leading *kufr* (infidel).[147] He expected Muslim fighters to pour into Afghanistan and join the fight against America. Bin Laden concluded, "Finally, everyone realized that America, that oppressive force, can be beaten, humiliated, brought low."[148]

Not all shared bin Laden's rosy outlook. No influx of fighters joined the struggle. Instead, *jihadis* inside and outside of al-Qaeda attacked bin Laden's and the organization's credibility. 'Abd-al-Halim Adl, an al-Qaeda insider, was not pleased. Al-Qaeda had a cooperative host, enjoyed freedom of access to training areas in Afghanistan, and received sufficient resources to conduct its operations. Al-Halim criticized bin Laden's heedless rush to attack without fully considering opposing viewpoints within the organization, or contemplating the consequences of provoking the world's sole superpower. Another al-Qaeda insider and member of the organization's

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[146] Bruce P., Montgomery, "Congressional Oversight: Vice President Richard B. Cheney's Executive Branch Triumph," *Political Science Quarterly* 120, no. 4 (Winter 2005-2006): 582. For more information on the Bush Administration efforts to consolidate its power at the expense of the legislative branch, see Charles E. Schumer, "Under Attack: Congressional Power in the Twenty-first Century," *Harvard Law & Policy Review* 1 (2007): 3-40. Senator Charles Schumer is a Democrat and has represented the state of New York since 1998. President Bush saw Congress as too bureaucratic, with tendencies, due to partisanship, to take extreme positions and an unwilling to compromise and to act. He felt frustrated at times with Congress because he felt that the challenges the nation faced, from social, economic and security, required doing more than the status quo. Bush, *Decision Points*, 306-307, 340. For a more balance review of Bush and Congress see, Michael Nelson, "George W. Bush and Congress: The Electoral Connection," *Perspectives on Political Science* 32, no. 3 (Summer 2003): 157-163.
[147] Gerges, *Journey of the Jihadist,* 207.
[148] Osama bin Laden, "Tactical Recommendations," in *Al Qaeda in Its Own Words*, edited by Gilles Kepel and Jean-Pierre Milelli (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 64.

Shura Council or governing body, Abu al-Walid al-Masri, accused bin Laden of catastrophic ineptitude.[149] In less than six months, training camps, support infrastructure, and trained personnel that took years to build lay in ruins. Al-Halim complained, "We are experiencing one setback after another and have gone from misfortune to disaster. … Our adherents have lost confidence in us and in our ability to manage the action."[150] Mohammed Essam Derbala, from al-Jama'a al-Islamiya, argued that the World Trade Center operations gave America the *carte blanche* it needed to wipe out al-Qaeda's infrastructure and proved counterproductive to the *ummah*'s interests.[151] Sayid Iman Sharif, known in *jihadi* circles as Doctor Fadl and highly regarded, questioned al-Qaeda's interpretation of *jihad* and argued that Islam does not authorize the killing of civilian non-Muslims and Muslims. According to Fadl's interpretation, al-Qaeda's practice of calling Muslims infidels is also prohibited according to Islam.[152]

Al-Qaeda remained on the defensive and struggled to confront Bush's War on Terror. In November 2001, American and Northern Alliance forces pushed the Taliban from northern cities and captured Kabul and other major cities. In December 2001, the Taliban lost control of Kandahar and fled to Pakistan.[153] Abu Musab al-Suri, one of al-Qaeda's leading strategic thinkers, lamented the devastation of the *mujahedeen* (Arab fighters). "The flower of the jihadist movement was killed or captured," he claimed.[154] He estimated that more than 4,000 fighters perished as a result of the American operations in Afghanistan; this represented the slaughter of 75 percent of al-Qaeda's fighting force. Additionally, as al-Qaeda affiliates fled to Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Morocco, these governments captured and at times killed the *mujahedeen*.

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[149] "The Afghan-Arabs," *Asharq Alawsat*, 29 June 2005, http://www.asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=3&id=627. (*Chicago*, 17.198)

[150] Translation of 'Abd –al-Halim Adl letter to another al-Qaeda member (13 June 2002). *USMA Counter Terrorism Center*, http://www.ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/Al-Adl-Letter_Translation.pdf. (*Chicago*, 17.237)

[151] Fawaz A. Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 200-204.

[152] Ronald Sandee, "Core Al-Qaida in 2008: A Review, *NEFA Foundation*, 8 April 2009, 13, http://www.nefafoundation.org/file/FeaturedDocs/nefa_AQin2008.pdf. (Chicago, 17.237).

[153] Jones, xiii.

[154] Abu Musad al-Suri, "The Call to Global Islamic Resistance," in *The Canons of Jihad: Terrorists' Strategy for Defeating America*, edited by Jim Lacey (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2008), 172.

Governments also transferred some of those captured to American forces, which in turn imprisoned the suspects at Guantanamo Bay.[155]

With its bases destroyed and its cadre scattered, al-Qaeda and its affiliates searched for alternate ways to remain viable. The Iraq War gave al-Qaeda the oxygen it needed to resuscitate itself.[156] It received another boost when news, and most importantly humiliating pictures, of prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib prison broke on 28 April 2004.[157] Angry Iraqis and would-be *jihadis* from across the Middle East, North Africa, and Europe flocked to fight Americans. One of al-Qaeda's strategies was to capitalize on the anger and to franchise its trademark. An alliance with Abu Musab al-Zarqawi presented al-Qaeda its first franchise opportunity. Al-Zarqawi, who managed to escape Afghanistan and settle in Kurdistan, Iraq, formed *Al-Tawid wal-Jihad* (Monotheism and Jihad) in June 2003.[158] Al-Zarqawi sought to continue the armed struggle against America in Iraq independent of al-Qaeda.[159] Al-Qaeda, however, courted Al-Zarqawi aggressively and persuaded him to align his organization with al-Qaeda. After eight months of exchanges, Al-Zarqawi agreed, swore loyalty to bin Laden, and renamed his organization al-Qaeda in Iraq on 19 October 2004.[160] Similarly, al-Qaeda franchised its name brand to the Algerian Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC). In 2007, the group changed its name to al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).[161]

Another al-Qaeda strategy was to launch information campaigns on line. In a letter to Mullah Omar, bin Laden commented, "It is obvious that the media war in this century is one of the strongest methods; in fact, its ratio may reach 90% of the total

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[155] Al-Suri, 169-172.

[156] Gerges, *Journey of the Jihadist*, 255.

[157] Phillip Carter, "The Road to Abu Ghraib," *Washington Monthly* 36, no. 11 (Nov 2004): 20-29; Seymour M. Hersh, "Torture at Abu Ghraib," The New Yorker, 10 May 2004, http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2004/05/10/040510fa_fact?currentPage=1. (*Chicago*, 17.181)

[158] Kepel and Milelli, 245.

[159] Kepel and Milelli, 247.

[160] Jeffery Pool, "Zarqawi's Pledge of Allegiance to al-Qaeda: From Mu'asker al-Battar, Issue 21," *Terrorism Monitor* 2, no. 24 (15 December 2004). http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=27305. (*Chicago*, 17. 187).

[161] "Al-Qaeda 'issues France threat,'" *BBC.com*, 14 September 2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/5345202.stm. (*Chicago*, 17.198) Camille Tawil, "New Strategies in al-Qaeda's Battle for Algeria," *Terrorism Monitor* 7, no. 22 (27 July 2009). http://camilletawil.blogspot.com/search?q=Abu+Omar+Abd+al-Birr. (*Chicago*, 17.181)

preparation for battles."[162] As al-Qaeda members fled Afghanistan in 2001, they left with a Kalashnikov in one hand and a laptop in the other.[163] Bin Laden established the Al Sahab Media Production Company, which released approximately 150 propaganda tapes from 2007-2008. It also spurred the creation of more than 5,000 *jihadi* websites by 2007.[164] The International Media Front of Islam became al-Qaeda's main site and included an on-line news program.[165] Cyberspace served as al-Qaeda's lifeline to continue its *jihad* as it provided a platform to give directions, recruit new members, solicit financial support, and offer *jihadi* training material.[166]

Nevertheless, the Bush years were difficult on al-Qaeda organizationally and operationally. Using remotely piloted, armed Predator drones, augmented by raids conducted by special operations forces, America targeted and killed al-Qaeda leaders in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, and beyond. In 2008, America intensified its efforts in Pakistan. The total number of drone strikes in Pakistan reached 34, compared to nine total strikes made from 2004 to 2007.[167] In 2008 alone, al-Qaeda lost more than ten of its core leaders.[168] These losses, however, did not destroy al-Qaeda; it experienced resurgences in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Yemen.[169]

Conclusion

Looking at Bush's challenges in context helps to capture the on-going dynamics that may have influenced the administration as it addressed the al-Qaeda threat. The administration's task was far from easy. The international setting was volatile with shifting political players and power brokers. No region was immune from the scourge of

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[162] Document #: AFGP-2002-600321 Full Translation Date: June 5, 2002. http://www.ctc.usma.edu/aq/pdf/AFGP-2002-600321-Trans.pdf. (*Chicago*, 17.237)

[163] Atwan, 122.

[164] Peter Bergen and Bruce Hoffman, "Assessing the Terrorist Threat," *Bipartisan Policy Center*, 10 September 2010, 20, http://www.bipartisanpolicy.org/sites/default/files/NSPG%20Final%20Threat%20Assessment.pdf . (*Chicago*, 17.237)
Patrick M. Cronin, ed., *Global Strategic Assessment 2009: America's Security Role in a Changing World* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2009), 129.

[165] Atwan, 129.

[166] Gabriel Weimann, "Al-Qa'ida's Extensive Use of the Internet," *CTC Sentinel* 1, no. 2 (January 2008) http://www.ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Vol1Iss2-Art3.pdf. (*Chicago*, 17.181)

[167] Thomas J. Billitteri, "Drone Warfare," *CQ Researcher* 20, no. 28 (6 August 2010): 656. http://www.asil.org/files/CQ_DroneWarfare.pdf. (*Chicago*, 17.237)

[168] Sandee, 3.

[169] Schmitt and Shanker, 106.

terrorism, which metastasized from South West Asia, to the Arabian Peninsula, then to Africa, next to Europe, and on to North America.[170] The deteriorating security situations in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan sustained and accelerated the disease. Domestic insecurities marred the nation. The economy suffered a recession in 2001 and 2008. Some Americans took out their anger and frustrations on fellow Americans who happened to be Muslims. Calls not to conflate terrorism and Islam failed to convince all Americans. In one extreme case a group charged that the Prophet Mohammed is a "demon-possessed pedophile," which added to the sense of social alienation and intolerance some Americans felt.[171]

Given this context, how well did the Bush Administration understand al-Qaeda and did it matter? While there was greater public discourse on terrorism, the discussions became toxic prior to and after the decision to go to war with Iraq as groupthink, social identity, and cognitive closure set in. Similar patterns were evident in public opinion and government policies. Greater understanding may be possible when public discourse, public opinion, and government policy check and balance against each other to ensure reasonable understanding of the enemy. This check and balance did not occur during this period. The cognitive struggles within each realm diverted attention away from understanding the enemy. Comments, views, and policies on terrorism were judged not on their own merits, but rather for how closely they aligned with the Bush Administration's position. In spite of this warped standard, blessed with abundant resources, America muddled through its war with al-Qaeda armed with effective tactics, such as Predator attacks, and reduced the threat's potency. Nonetheless, though al-Qaeda was on the run and struggling for survival, it was pleased to have achieved two important objectives: 1) it proved America could be bloodied, and 2) its radical extremist message was widely disseminated.[172] Al-Qaeda leaders could not have planned the Administration's next move, which proved to be a strategic windfall. By invading Iraq,

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[170] Musab Al-Suri advocated that the *mujahedeen* "…spread a Jihadist [*sic*] cancer to face the bad cancer of the world order." Paul Cruickshank and Mohannad Hage Ali, "Abu Musab Al Suri: Architect of the New Al Qaeda" in *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 30, 1, (London, UK: Routledge, 2007), 9.

[171] Susan Sachs, "Baptist Attacks Islam, Inciting Cries of Intolerance," *New York Times*, 15 June 2002, http://www.nytimes.com/2002/06/15/national/15BAPT.html. (*Chicago*, 17.198)

[172] Cronin, 129. This does not mean that al-Qaeda's message was equally as widely accepted. A small minority of Muslims accepted and agreed with al-Qaeda's message. An even smaller percentage responded to his call for *jihad*.

Americans occupied yet another Muslim country and bogged down in an insurgency it struggled to understand and defeat. Thus, al-Qaeda could engage and economically exhaust the United States while gaining even more recruits for its cause.[173]

This case shows that a better understanding of the enemy is not a prerequisite for success. Alternatively, understanding the enemy is not an antidote for failure. Understanding is a social construct. To ensure that balanced understandings and prescriptions emerge requires the active participation of the government (government policy), the American public (public opinion), and the media (public discourse). When one or more of these pillars renege on their responsibility, or is marginalized, the likelihood increases that emergent understanding will become bigoted. A better understanding of the enemy remains important as it allows one to more efficiently use limited resources. In times of budgetary constraints and shrinking resources, knowledge and understanding are critical decision-enablers to achieve policy objectives economically. Additionally, better understanding may minimize pursuing counterproductive policies. Prior to the Iraq War, America succeeded in severely degrading al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. Its decision to start the Iraq War helped to resuscitate al-Qaeda and prolonged the fighting. In addition to the monetary expense, this decision cost America 41,073 military service members killed or wounded from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.[174]

In closing, the Bush Administration fought al-Qaeda for seven grueling years. Throughout this period, the administration trained its sights on the shadowy apparition of bin Laden and al-Qaeda. Senior members of the Bush Administration were determined to capture or kill bin Laden and come to grips with a global terrorist threat that they were only beginning to understand. Just as the World Trade Center Towers symbolized America's strength, bin Laden became the symbol of radical Islam, terrorism, and al-Qaeda. His death, at minimum, would have a psychological impact on terrorism and the nation. Bush wanted this prize. In his memoir, he wrote, "I also knew I was leaving

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[173] For details on Al-Qaeda's post-Iraq invasion strategy, see Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, "Bin Laden's 'War of a Thousand Cuts' Will Live On," *The Atlantic* online edition (3 May 2011), available online at http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2011/05/bin-ladens-war-of-a-thousand-cuts-will-live-on/238228/. (*Chicago*, 17.181)

[174] "Operation Iraqi Freedom," *iCasualties.org*, http://icasualties.org/iraq/index.aspx. "Operation Enduring Freedom," *iCasualties.org*, http://icasualties.org/OEF/Index.aspx. (*Chicago*, 17.237)

behind unfinished business. I wanted badly to bring bin Laden to justice. The fact that we did not ranks among my great regrets. It certainly wasn't for lack of effort. For seven years, we kept the pressure on."[175] Unfortunately this singular focus, when combined with elements of groupthink, social identity, and cognitive closure led the Administration to pursue war with Iraq and into a situation for which they were unprepared and really did not understand: Iraq, with its complex social, political, and economic tensions, which were unleashed into an insurgency and civil war that increasingly occupied American blood, treasure, and attention.

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[175] Bush, *Decision Points*, 220.

Conclusion

On 1 May 2011, President Barak Obama addressed the nation. "Today, at my direction, the United States launched a targeted operation against that compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan," explained the president.[1] "After a firefight, … [members of an American Seal team] killed Osama bin Laden, … [who] has been al Qaeda's leader and symbol. … The death of bin Laden marks the most significant achievement to date in our nation's effort to defeat al Qaeda [*sic*]."[2] Former Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush sent their congratulatory notes to President Obama, the counterterrorism community, and the nation.[3]

Following Obama's announcement, many Americans took to the streets and celebrated.[4] America had come a long way from that clear September day in 2001. Back then, there were few who tried to slow the momentum for war against Afghanistan and al-Qaeda. Congresswoman Barbara Lee (D, CA) implored her colleagues to stop and to think. "I am convinced that military action will not prevent further acts of international terrorism against the United States. … Let's just pause, just for a minute, and think through the implications of our actions today, so that this does not spiral out of control."[5] In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, her comments fell on deaf ears.

President Bush, in particular, was determined to act decisively against al-Qaeda. He energized his administration and pressed upon them the urgency that he believed this fight required. "Now is the time to draw the line in the sand against the evil ones," he

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[1] Remarks of President Barak Obama, "Osama bin Laden is Dead," *The White House Blog*, 2 May 2011, http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2011/05/02/osama-bin-laden-dead. (Chicago, 17.237)

[2] Obama, "Osama bin Laden is Dead."

[3] Bush posted his message on Facebook at http://www.facebook.com/notes/george-w-bush/statement-by-president-george-w-bush/219390698087905. (*Chicago*, 17.237). For Clinton's note see, Evan McMorris-Santoro, "Bill Clinton: 'I Congratulate The President' On Death of Bin Laden," *TPM LiveWire*, 1 May 2011, http://tpmlivewire.talkingpointsmemo.com/2011/05/bill-clinton-i-congratulate-the-president-on-death-of-bin-laden.php. (*Chicago*, 17.198)

[4] Jonathan Zimmerman, "Celebrating Osama bin Laden's death is anti-American … and not very biblical," *Christian Science Monitor*, 2 May 2011, http://www.csmonitor.com/Commentary/Opinion/2011/0502/Celebrating-Osama-bin-Laden-s-death-is-anti-American-and-not-very-biblical. (*Chicago*, 17.198)

[5] Transcript of Senator Barbara Lee's comments to Congress on 14 September 2001. Available from *Democracy Now*, http://www.democracynow.org/2009/10/7/as_afghan_war_enters_9th_year. (Chicago, 17.237)

said.[6] Bin Laden and al-Qaeda would not mistake the Bush Administration for "paper tigers."[7] America would go on the offensive and stay there; cruise-missile diplomacy would not be this administration's trademark.[8] It would act unilaterally if necessary and Bush would push Congress to "untie the hands of our law enforcement officials so they can win the war."[9]

The events that have occurred since 2001 are instructive and have informed this thesis. Using the Bush Administration and its War on Terror, this thesis looked at how well America understood al-Qaeda as events unfolded following the attacks on 11 September 2001. Chapter 1 presented the case that understanding is a mental state that one consciously reaches by synthesizing his views with those of his community to come to agreement about commonly perceived social facts about "the other" or the enemy. Understanding is a social construct formed through the interplay of public discourse, public opinion, and government policy. Understanding, however, is susceptible to distortion and can be flawed due to groupthink, social identity, and cognitive closures. These cognitive impediments represent different levels of distortion. Cognitive closure represents psychological impediments at the micro or individual level. Groupthink captures psychological impediments at the meso or intra-group level, and social identity reflects psychological impediments at the macro or inter-group level. Through different mechanisms these psychological inhibitors divert attention away from the subject requiring understanding or the truth to other issues of interest such as group cohesion.

Chapter 2 exposed the reader to the history of Osama bin Laden and his rise to power. America contributed to bin Laden's rise by giving him the attention he sought and needed. He aimed to stay in the limelight and saw attacking America as a means to an end. His attacks and America's reaction would incite and awaken the sleeping *ummah* (Muslim community) to fight apostasy. Until achieving this goal, among many others, bin

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[6] Bob Woodward, *Bush at War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 2002), 224.
[7] Osama bin Laden wrote in May 1998, "Our boys no longer viewed America as a superpower. So, when they left Afghanistan, they went to Somalia and prepared themselves carefully for a long war. They thought that the Americans were like the Russians … They were stunned when they discovered how low was the morale of the American soldier. … they realized that the American soldier was just a paper tiger. He was unable to endure the strikes that were dealt to his army, so he fled." Raymond Ibrahim, *The Al Qaeda Reader* (New York: Broadway Books, 2007), 260.
[8] George W. Bush, *Decision Points* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2010), 135.
[9] David Stout, "Bush Calls for Broader Police Powers to Fight Terrorism," *New York Times*, 10 September 2003, http://www.nytimes.com/2003/09/10/politics/10CND-TERR.html. (*Chicago*, 17.198)

Laden was unlikely to stop his attacks on America. The chapter also explained how the Clinton Administration responded to al-Qaeda's provocations. The administration used a combination of military, law-enforcement, and covert measures to address the threat. These efforts, however, were ineffective and emboldened al-Qaeda. Clinton faced an elusive and resilient adversary.

The detailed case study in Chapter 3 provided specific context the nation faced internationally and domestically as it battled al-Qaeda. The reader also read about the public discourse, which transformed from introspective and collegial to toxic and bifurcated. Public opinion and government policy reflected similar patterns as the years progressed and the Bush Administration expanded its war beyond al-Qaeda to include Iraq. In the end, the focus of public discourse, public opinion, and government policy were not on developing sound understanding of the threat America faced, but instead on whether people's comments and actions were patriotic. Government policy dominated the public-discourse/public-opinion/government-policy triad. The ideal exchanges between the various elements of the triad, to offset and moderate one another, did not occur. Public discourse and public opinion did not balance against government policy and instead aligned together. Facing no counterbalance, government policy acted independently and in accordance to its own logic. That logic was shrouded in a Hobbesian fog where al-Qaeda and terrorism was a monolithic giant capable of bringing America to its knees. Consequently, a detour that included Iraq seemed acceptable, reasonable, and necessary to prevent other attacks from occurring based on how poorly the reality of the threat of al-Qaeda was perceived. America continued along its hazy path until the evidence began to mount. Iraq did not have weapons of mass destruction. An al-Qaeda-Iraq link was a chimera. The majority of the international community did not agree that the ends justified the means. It condemned the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuses. As these realities mounted, some Americans awoke from their torpor and voiced their objections. Those who remained cognitively shackled attacked these contrarians. The struggle to reach a more comprehensive and accurate understanding of al-Qaeda and the threat did not materialize until well after the fact. In spite of these shortcomings, America was still able to devastate al-Qaeda's leadership and seriously degrade al-Qaeda's

operational effectiveness. A lack of understanding did not lead to America's failure but it significantly increased the moral and material costs far beyond the level of the threat.

Understanding Ourselves

There are several implications that we can draw from this case study to help in understanding ourselves.[10] First, understanding the enemy is desirable, but a failure of understanding will not necessarily preclude success if national resources are plentiful and an enemy is relatively insignificant. America fought a rich man's war, largely by borrowing on foreign investment and credit, against al-Qaeda.[11] It had the economic, diplomatic, and military resources to try different approaches simultaneously. America could afford to invest and to spent $500 million on efforts like creating Alhurra television and Sawa radio networks to counter al-Qaeda's ideology in the Arab world.[12] It bought the loyalty of needed partners such as Pakistan at a price tag of $10 billion.[13] As budgets shrink, however, better understanding of the enemy becomes crucial for the effective allocation of limited resources to meet national objectives.

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[10] My implications and recommendations are tailored for national security professionals. While the previous chapters detailed the cognitive challenges the American people, the executive branch, and the media experienced, to attempt to offer recommendations for this group is unrealistic and presumptuous. Instead, I focus my attention on national security professionals who I feel are a practical target audience. I define members of the national security community as the Department of State, Department of Defense, the military, the Intelligence Community, the Law Enforcement Community and all other governmental agencies that interact directly or indirectly with the executive branch and are directly impacted by its decisions and can exert some influence on its policy choices.

[11] In 2003, the U.S. began paying for two wars at an annual price tag of $81.2 billion; meanwhile, the national debt crept to $6.9 trillion. China is America's biggest lender as well as its top foreign holder of government debt. China currently holds $1.1 trillion of US Treasury notes. In August of 2011 in reaction to the U.S. debt ceiling crisis and Standard & Poor downgrading of American credit rating. Amy Belasco, "The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11," *Congressional Research Service*, RL33110, 29 March 2011, 3, http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL33110.pdf. (*Chicago*, 17.237); Donald R. Byrne and Edward T. Derbin, ed., "The National Debt, the Federal Deficit, and the Fiscal Drag," *Economic Newsletter for the New Millennium* 2003, no. 4 (18 November 2003): 1; Tania Branigan, "China Scolds the West over Debt Crisis and Eurozone Woes" *The Guardian,* 8 August 2011 http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2011/aug/08/china-scolds-west-debt-crisis (accessed 21 October 2011). (*Chicago*, 17.198)

[12] Dafina Linzer, "Lost in Translation: Alhurra – America's Troubled Effort to Win Middle East Hearts and Minds," *ProPublica*, 22 June 2008, http://www.propublica.org/article/alhurra-middle-east-hearts-and-minds-622. (*Chicago*, 17.181)

[13] Eric Schmitt and Thom Shanker, *Counter Strike: the Untold Story of America's Secret Campaign Against Al Qaeda* (New York: Times Book, 2011), 100.

Second, even if there is a minority who accurately understand the enemy, they are likely to face difficulties in persuading the majority. Prior to 11 September, Richard Clarke, the Clinton Administration's counterterrorism coordinator, tried to persuade the Bush Administration to take bin Laden and al-Qaeda seriously, but failed. As the Bush Administration's Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage commented, "I don't think we really had made the leap in our mind that we are no longer safe behind these great oceans."[14] Bearers of knowledge will have to use initiative, creativity, and perseverance to persuade others to consider the facts. They should remain humble, however, and recognize that they too are vulnerable to misunderstandings. Consequently, they should not belittle those who misunderstand. Rather national security professionals should dedicate their efforts to co-opting the institutions' informal leaders and influencers as well as mastering the bureaucratic processes to advance the truth as they understand it.

Third, understanding is a socially constructed process and not necessarily based solely on facts. Those with a vested interest, such as the military, will be influenced by the emergent understanding, and should engage in the process to influence the outcome as favorably as possible. Former Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara is criticized for not publicly voicing his concerns that the Vietnam War was unwinnable during his time in office. Although he came to a fair understanding of the situation and the enemy by 1967, he kept his understanding and concerns private. McNamara reasoned that "It's not appropriate for a secretary of defense to … go public."[15] While government and military officials should respect the chain of command, they should not forget their obligation to protect and serve the American people. As such, they should do everything within the limits of the law to lobby their institutions and others to consider their perspective. As individuals they are weak; they need to work to form an alliance of support to press for change. If these professionals are armed with validated facts and evidence, they should remain steadfast in their conviction and creative in their approach and not let a difficult task deter their march to doing what is right. When loyalty and protocol supersede the need to avoid unnecessary loss of life due to war, America's interests are at

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[14] Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 546-547.
[15] Stephen Talbot, "The day Henry Kissinger cried," *Salon*, 25 December 2002, http://www.salon.com/2002/12/05/kissinger_3/. (Chicago, 17.187)

disequilibrium and require recalibration. Those who know better should fervently act to inform and persuade others.

Fourth, every generation is susceptible to cognitive impediments to understanding. This generation, with its rich access to information, is no smarter or less immune to misunderstandings than our forefathers. Following World War II, President Harry Truman and the American people, influenced by a Cold War mentality, succumbed to cognitive blinders that led them to the Korean War. As the late professor of history and author James Stokesbury wrote, "In the context of the time, and given the perceptions, preconceptions, and predilections of the men who made the decision, intervention [in Korea] probably could not have been avoided."[16] In the new millennium, Bush and the American people, influenced by a War-on-Terror mentality, fell prey to cognitive roadblocks that led them to hastily expand the war without fully understanding "the other." War on Terror came to mean war against any adversary the Bush Administration deemed an imminent threat. Iraq was such a threat and so it fell under the umbrella of the War on Terror. National security professionals should remain mindful and guard against cognitive impediments that limit their understanding of the enemy and constrict their options. Remaining critical is an individual and institutional obligation.

Fifth, national security professionals will have to learn to build stronger relationships with policy makers' staffs. As Bernard Brodie noted, there is a gulf between national policy and security professionals. Brodie wrote, "The soldiers [national security professionals] challenged by the increasing technical and logistics demands of their craft, had been growing increasingly and perhaps excessively professional; but no comparable development had been taking place among politicians."[17] Often, national security professionals have the expertise and information necessary to assist policy makers in reaching wise decisions. Consequently, as professionals, national security officers have a responsibility to build bridges of understanding between policy and security islands. These bridges can be built through personal relationships. Relationships do not happen haphazardly. Relationships require work and persistent engagement. They involve learning and practicing the art of socializing, social etiquette, conversation, and other

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[16] James L. Stokesbury, *A Short History of the Korean War* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1990), 38.
[17] Bernard Brodie, *Strategy in the Missile Age* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1959), 69.

pleasantries. National security professionals should view themselves as ambassadors of their organizations and should strengthen their relationship with policy makers to ensure that when it matters their perspectives are at least heard, if not embraced.

Understanding "the Other"

In 2005, the Department of Defense called for a "language transformation."[18] In the Defense Language Transformation Roadmap of January 2005, the authors concluded that: "Post 9/11 military operations reinforce the reality that the Department of Defense needs a significantly improved organic capability in emerging languages and dialects, a greater competence and regional area skills in those languages and dialects, and a surge capability to rapidly expand its language capabilities on short notice." The Quadrennial Defenses Review of 2010 reiterated the call for a greater number of military and civilian personnel with cultural, regional, and language skills.[19] Based on these demands and the presented case study on understanding the enemy during the War on Terror, two recommendations follow that offer ways America could effectively improve its understanding of "the other" and meet its requirement for more multi-lingual and culturally intelligent professionals.

The first recommendation to improve understanding of "the other" would involve expanding the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program and make it a truly bi-directional exchange. IMET is a Department of State program that provides grants to allied and friendly nations to train their military and civilian students at American military institutions such as the Army War College.[20] The program is designed to expose future foreign leaders to the American way of life and build lasting relationships. Few slots are available for Americans to become immersed in other ways of life. IMET should be broadened to stipulate a one-for-one exchange. For instance, for

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[18] Defense Language Transformation Roadmap, January 2005, http://www.defense.gov/news/Mar2005/d20050330roadmap.pdf. (*Chicago*, 17.237)

[19] "Building Language Skills and Cultural Competencies in the Military: Bridging the Gap" *U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Armed Services Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations*, December 2010, 2, http://armedservices.house.gov/index.cfm/files/serve?File_id=2361fa65-7e40-41df-8682-9725d1c377da. (*Chicago*, 17.237)

[20] For more information on IMET, see the Defense Security Cooperation Agency page at http://www.dsca.mil/home/international_military_education_training.htm. (*Chicago,* 17.237)

every Czech student who attends school in the U.S., an American student should attend school or serve on the staff of a Czech institution. While some will cite the language barrier as a limiting factor, this can be overcome through immersion and by sending the right American officer. The experience would enrich the American officer as well as the institutions involved. Language proficiency does not equate to cultural acuity. To master another culture requires time and immersion. Additionally, American institutions should value linguistic and cultural diversity for its own sake, not simply because it is mandated or has utility. Fostering a culture that values languages is more likely to encourage and motivate individuals to invest their personal time to pursue learning difficult foreign languages. Institutions can show their commitment to this goal by not only encouraging personnel, but also recognizing these individuals through promotions and proper career placement, where these new skills can continue to develop and benefit the institution. An expanded IMET program would provide American security professionals the opportunity to begin acquiring some of these cultural and linguistic skills. America needs to broaden its aperture and exchanges beyond its traditional allies such as the United Kingdom, France and Japan. It should establish bi-directional IMET programs with Nigeria, Congo, Pakistan, India, and other peoples and cultures that are less familiar.

The second recommendation to improve our collective understanding of threats in the world is by leveraging America's diverse population to create domestic cultural immersion hubs. America is a nation rich with immigrants from around the world. Many immigrant communities retain their traditions and languages and could serve as effective educators of alternate and foreign perspectives. Delicately crafted community outreach programs could be used to encourage immigrant communities to embrace a small number of national security professionals into their communities for the purpose of exposing these individuals to their way of thinking and enhance their linguistic skills. This is likely the most difficult program to implement because immigrant communities are often suspicious of outsiders, particularly ones with ties to the government. Nonetheless, this task is not insurmountable and deserves consideration as a cost effective measure to create the conditions for culture immersion locally.

Tools to Fight Cognitive Impediments

To inoculate national security professionals from cognitive inhibitors, there are three suggested courses of action. The first is utilizing a system of peer review and criticism to hone analytical skills. Prior to World War II, the German general staff had a tradition of using *Denkscrift* to promote and to sharpen the analytical skills of its officers.[21] *Denkschrift* were idea papers staff members wrote and circulated on how to reform the German military. These proposals generated debate, were peer reviewed, and compelled the writers and their critics to present and defend ideas critically. In so doing, writers were compelled to see alternate viewpoints and confront their biases. Adopting a similar system of staff idea papers for peer review would provide practical training for American national security professionals and could assist them in overcoming their cognitive closures. Idea papers would differ from the current use and practice of white papers in that idea paper would be used more broadly and not only at the national level but also the lower levels of the national bureaucracy. They should serve as training tools. As national security officers climb the professional ladder, they should have the communication skills necessary to present and argue a position. Incorporating idea papers early into national security officers' careers could help to create a culture of critical thinkers and persuasive communicators. Idea papers can nurture these traits over time. The Secretary of Defense, Secretary of State, or service chiefs could set the topic of interest on a monthly basis and solicit participants' ideas. In Germany, this system proved of immense value beyond analytical training, and introduced ideas that were later incorporated into the German military. Chief of general staff Hans von Seeckt initially circulated his ideas of maneuver war in a 1919 *Denkschrift*.[22] The German military would come to adopt his concept and develop the effective doctrine of *blitzkrieg*, which proved decisive in Germany's early victories against Poland, Norway, Denmark, and France. A note of caution, however: any tool to include the idea paper can blind decision-makers if the documents or ideas are accepted uncritically and treated dogmatically. To ensure that idea papers remain a practical tool that encourages fresh ideas and healthy debates requires leadership and vigilance.

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[21] James S. Corum, "A Comprehensive Approach to Change: Reform in the German Army in the Interwar Period," in *The Challenge of Change: Military Institutions and New Realities,* 1918-1941, eds. Harold R. Winton and David R. Mets (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 58.
[22] Corum, 58.

Secondly, creating more interagency and civilian-government conferences and training exercises can foster an environment that embraces a plurality of ideas. National security professionals must periodically venture outside of their institutions to combat groupthink and stagnation. Active efforts should be made to hear ideas that are contrary and conflict with concepts to which they are accustomed, to invigorate their creativity and limit rigidity of thought. By increasing interaction between agencies and with the civilian sector, national security professionals also develop relationships and networks outside of their work environment, which they can use as sounding boards and independent sources of feedback.

Thirdly and lastly, the U.S. should increase the number of its international exchanges. National security officers should be encouraged to take classes about world politics, history, cultures, and languages from available civilian institutions as part of their professional development. In addition, foreign travel and exchanges should be encouraged. So long as American national security professionals maintain insular worldviews, they will fail to appreciate other's perspectives and will tend to simplify the world into social identity lines of them and us. Through increased international exchanges, officers will learn that while Americans differ from Iranians and Syrians we do share some interests.

Along these lines, America should abandon its practice of categorizing states into "axis of evil" lists. State relations should be based on mutual respect and national interest and not arbitrary labels. The rhetoric is counterproductive as it undermines efforts to establish communication channels with countries America is trying to influence. You cannot influence nations you cannot effectively communicate with as you are depriving yourself of the opportunity to learn about that nation to discover which approach may be most effective. In diplomacy, learning about others through an intermediary is a poor substitute.

While this thesis represents only a preliminary effort of enquiry into the subject of understanding and its cognitive barriers, it contributes to the limited body of scholarly work that focuses attention on understanding not only the enemy but also ourselves. Through increased self-awareness and better understanding of the enemy, we can prepare our nation to confront future challenges where the stakes, costs, and risks may be much

higher. In those cases, America may not be able to afford the time and resources to evolve and adapt its responses. Without taking such precautionary measures, we may find that Sun Tzu is correct indeed, for "If ignorant both of your enemy and of yourself, you are certain in every battle to be in peril."[23]

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[23] Sun Tzu, *The Illustrated Art of War*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 125.

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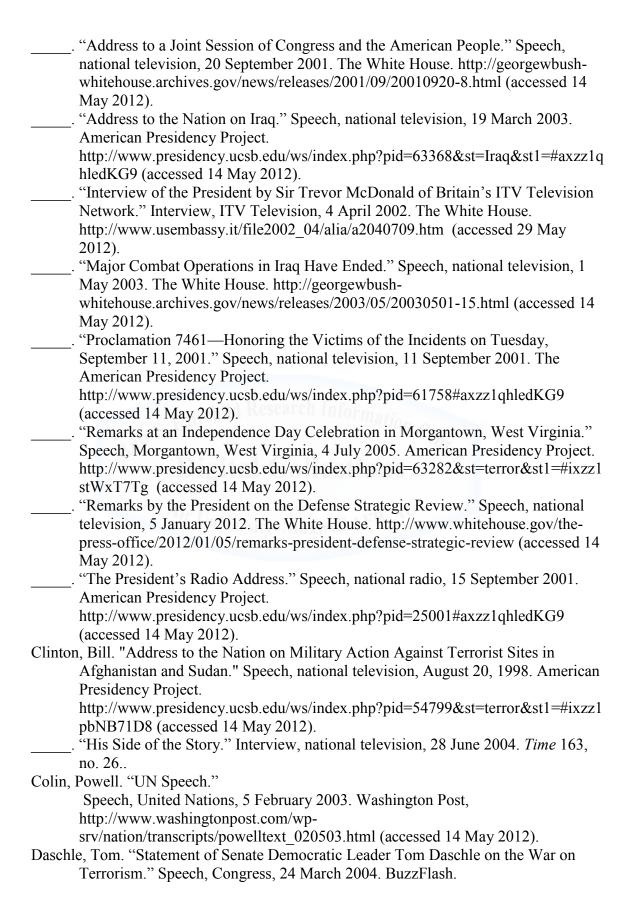
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